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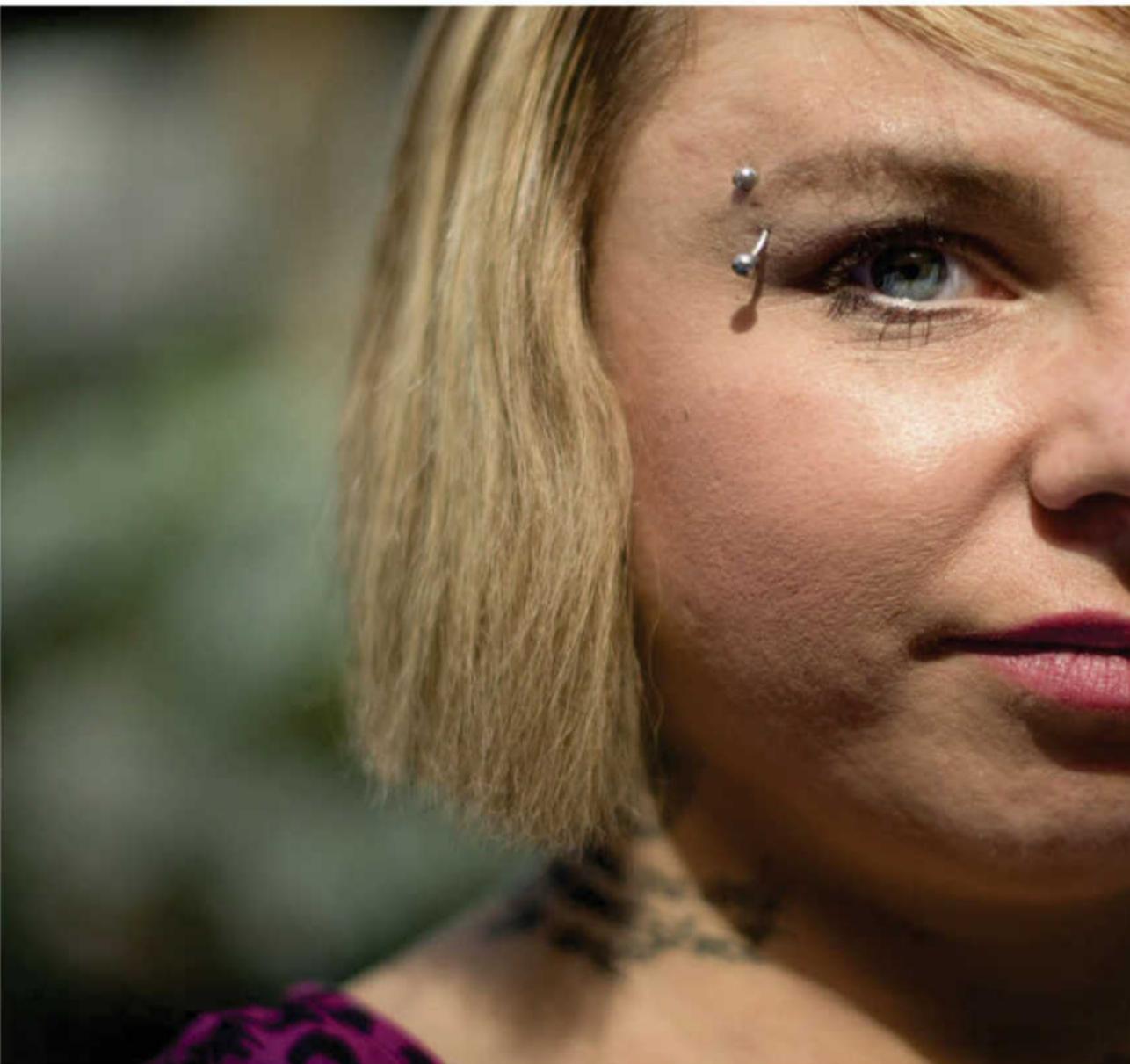
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THE DUNGEON ON SEYMORE AVENUE

MICHELLE KNIGHT IS FAMOUS FOR SURVIVING
11 YEARS OF BRUTAL RAPE AND TORTURE.
BUT THAT DOESN'T PAY THE RENT

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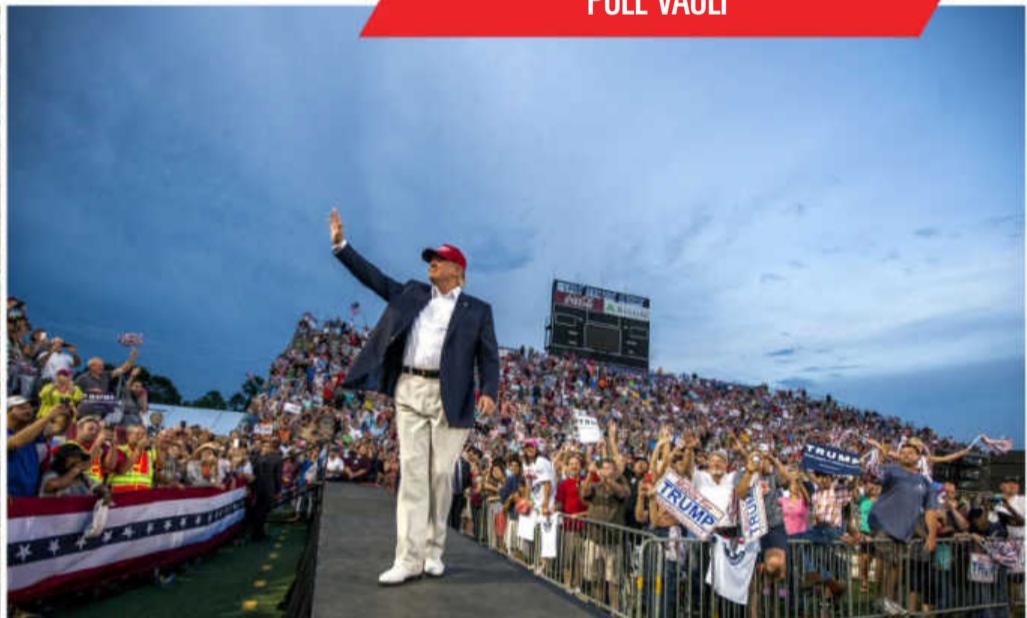
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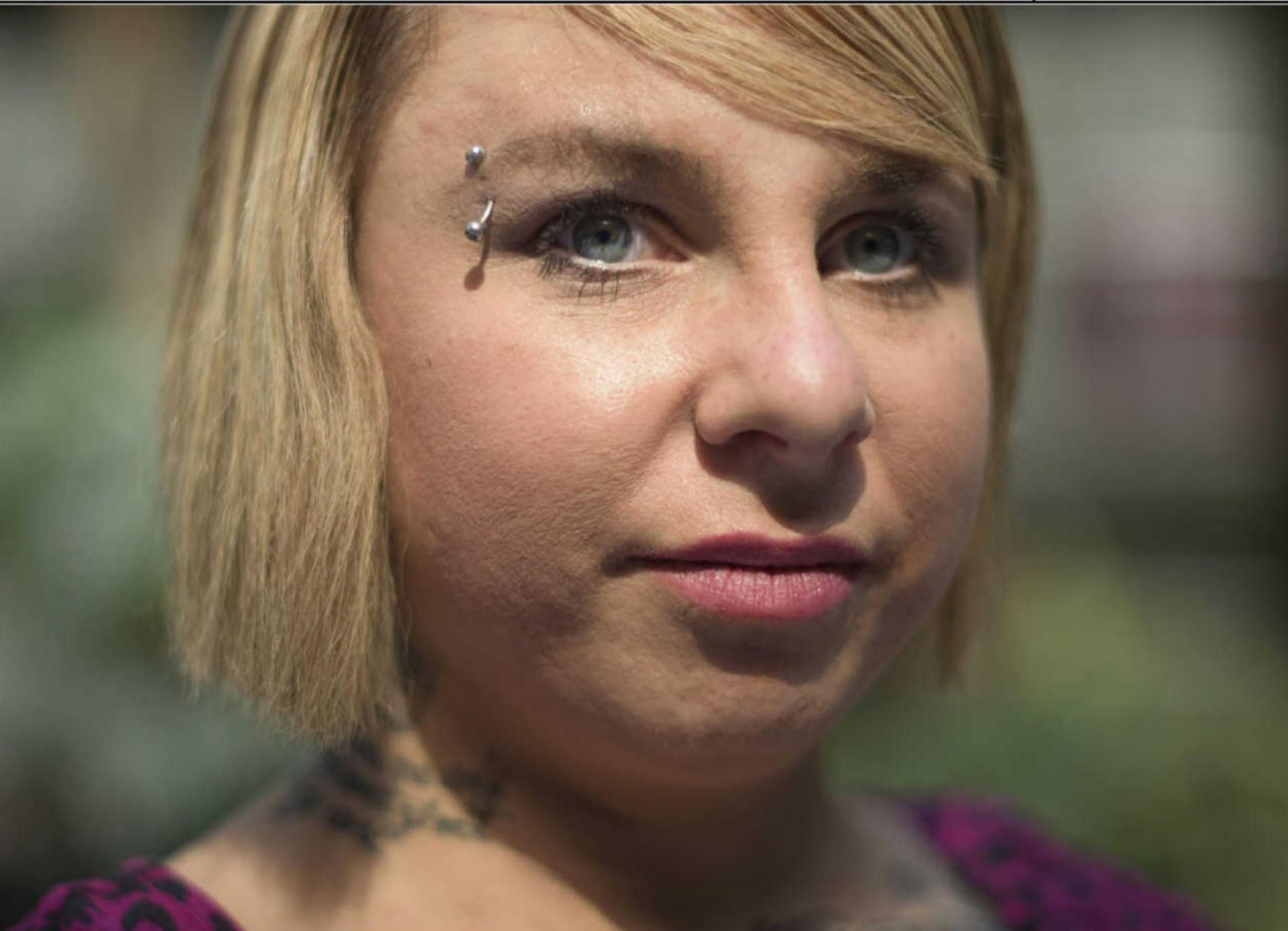


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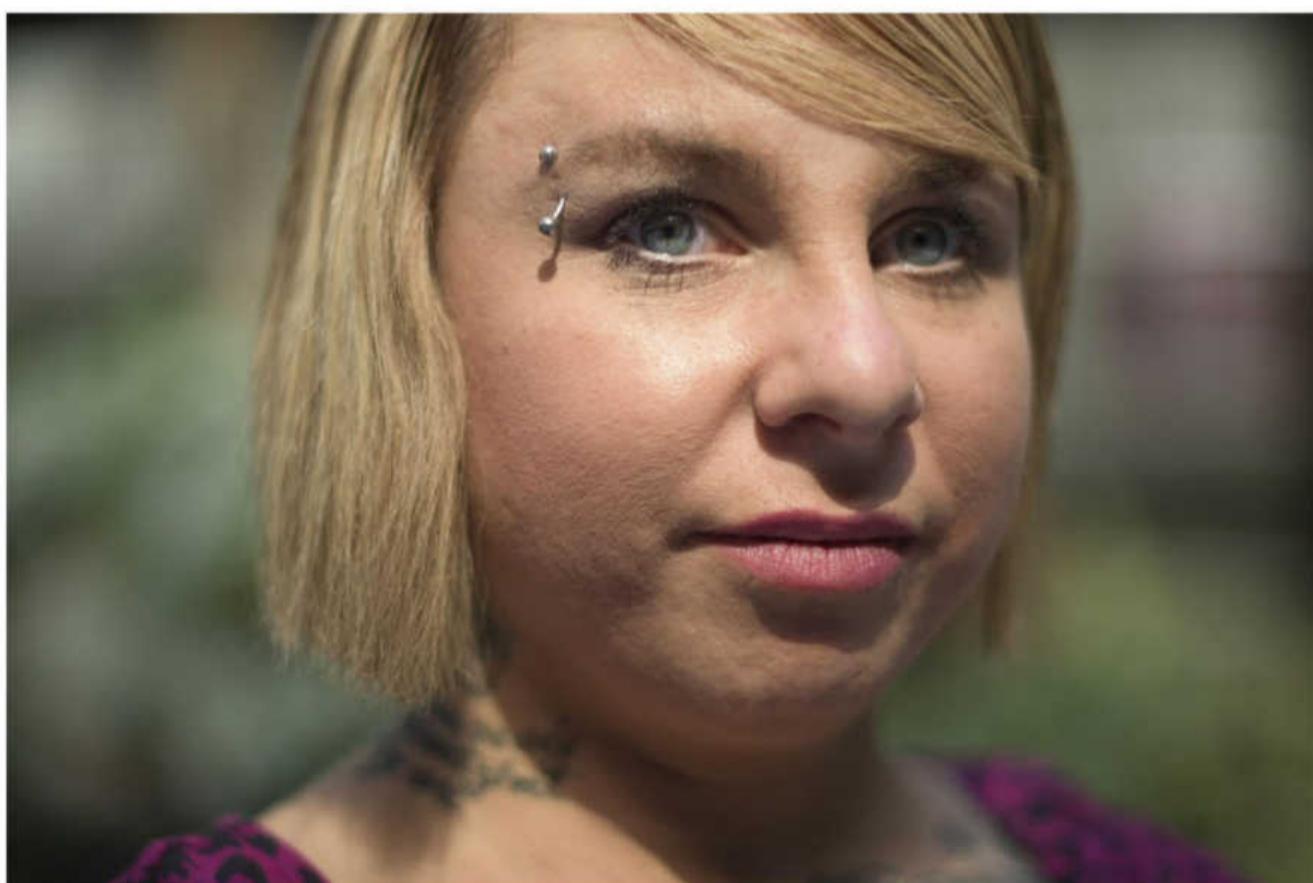
Dustin Franz for Newsweek

LIFE AFTER ELEVEN YEARS OF CAPTIVITY, RAPE AND TORTURE: MICHELLE KNIGHT'S STORY

MICHELLE KNIGHT IS ONE OF THE WORLD'S MOST FAMOUS SURVIVORS. BUT THAT DOESN'T PAY THE RENT OR BUY BACK THE LIFE THAT WAS RIPPED FROM HER.

A young woman walked into a Family Dollar store in Cleveland, exhausted, sweaty and desperate. Michelle Knight was 21 years old, and she'd spent the past few hours searching for the location of a crucial meeting. The appointment, with social services, was to discuss how she might regain custody of her 2-year-old son, who'd been placed in foster care a few months earlier after her mother's boyfriend got drunk and, Knight says, became abusive and broke the boy's leg.

It was August 2002—years before smartphones and Google Maps—and after nearly four hours of wrong turns, Knight spotted the Family Dollar store. She bought a soda and started asking people for directions. A woman in the soda aisle couldn't help. The cashier couldn't either. Knight was about to walk out when she heard a male voice: "I know exactly where that is." She looked up and saw a man with thick, messy hair and a potbelly, dressed in black jeans and a stained flannel shirt.



Lilly Rose Lee, formerly Michelle Knight, was abducted and held captive in 2002 inside a home where she was beaten, starved, tortured and raped for over a decade until she escaped in 2013. Credit: Dustin Franz for Newsweek

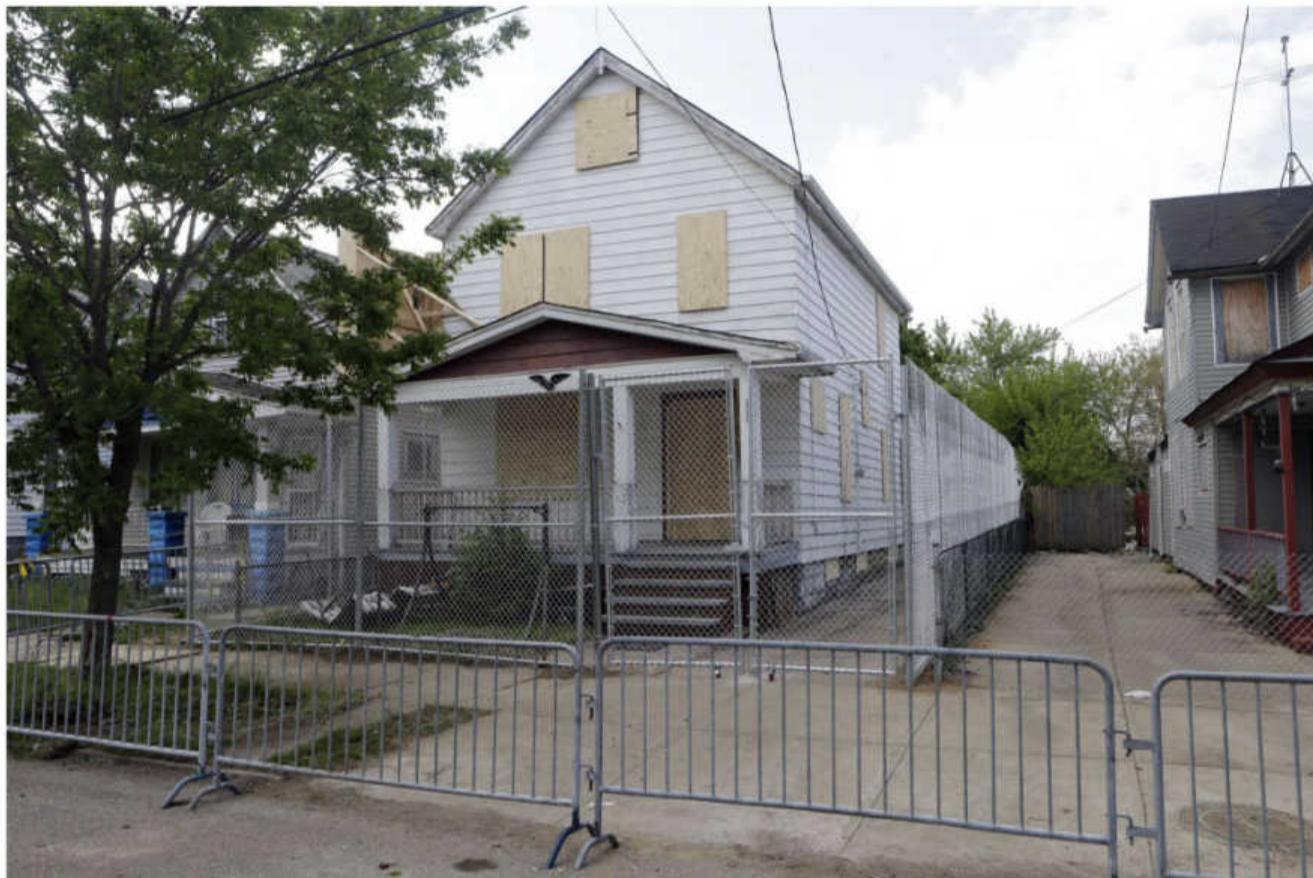
“Oh my gosh, you’re Emily’s dad!” Knight said. Standing before her was Ariel Castro, the father of a girl she knew from the neighborhood. While Knight had never met him, she’d seen photos of him on Emily’s cell and overheard her talking to him on the phone.

Castro smiled. “If you give me a second here, maybe I can show you how to get there,” he said softly. “Want me to give you a ride?”

She gratefully followed him out to his car.

Castro’s orange Chevy was littered with Big Mac wrappers and Chinese food containers. “Wow, you must live in this place,” Knight said, as recounted in her memoir, *Finding Me: A Decade of Darkness, a Life Reclaimed*. He laughed. Instead of driving straight to the social services meeting, he told her he had to make a quick stop at his house first. They started talking about Knight’s son, Joey, and then Castro mentioned that his dog had just had puppies. By the time he pulled up to his house on Seymour Avenue, just a few blocks from where Knight lived, he’d convinced her to take one home for Joey.

A tall chain-link fence surrounded the dilapidated, multi-story home, and trash was strewn across the lawn. Castro drove down the driveway, got out of the car and secured a large padlock on the gate. That puzzled Knight. Weren’t they only going to be there for a few minutes? Castro said something about not wanting his truck to get stolen, then helped her out of the car. She saw an old man standing in the yard next door, so she waved. He waved back. Then she followed Castro inside.



A 10-foot chain link fence surrounds the home of Ariel Castro in Cleveland, May 14, 2013. Castro kidnapped and raped three women in the home for over a decade. Credit: Mark Duncan/AP

The thick air smelled like stale beer, urine and rotten black beans, and many of the windows were boarded up. Knight couldn't believe Emily spent time here. "She's right downstairs, putting some laundry in the machine," Castro said. "Why don't you come with me upstairs so you can go ahead and pick out a puppy?" Knight hesitated. She didn't hear any puppies. She didn't hear Emily either. But Castro had an answer for everything: The puppies were sleeping, and Emily would be up any moment. He pointed to the staircase, and Knight started climbing.

On the second-floor landing, he directed her to a small bedroom with pink walls. "They're under there," he said, pointing to the dresser. Knight took another step forward and—BAM!—Castro slammed the door shut behind them. He then slapped one hand over her mouth and nose and the other against her head, and pushed her to the ground. Knight started shaking. She couldn't scream. All she could do was stare at the two metal poles on either side of the room, and the taut wire running between them. Castro tied an orange

extension cord around her ankles and wrists, yanked her limbs together behind her back, then wrapped the cord around her neck. “You’re only gonna be here for a little while. I’m not gonna keep you that long,” she remembers him saying as he unzipped his pants and masturbated until he ejaculated on her.

Castro then sat on a stool, breathing heavily. “Now I need you to be still so I can put you up on these poles,” he said, shoving Knight onto her stomach. He tied a second extension cord to the one around her limbs and neck, then attached it to the wire hanging between the poles. Suddenly, Knight felt herself being roughly hoisted into the air. Her entire body dangled, face down, in a plank position about a foot above the floor, neck cocked, back arched slightly, hands and feet bound behind her. Castro stuffed a smelly sock in Knight’s mouth, covered it with duct tape, blasted the radio and walked out. She heard the door slam shut and his feet pounding down the stairs. Then, nothing.

“The first thing that came to my head was, Holy shit, I’m gonna die here,” Knight says. “I’m not gonna be able to hold my son in my hands. I’m not gonna be able to say I love him. I’m gonna miss every moment of his life.”

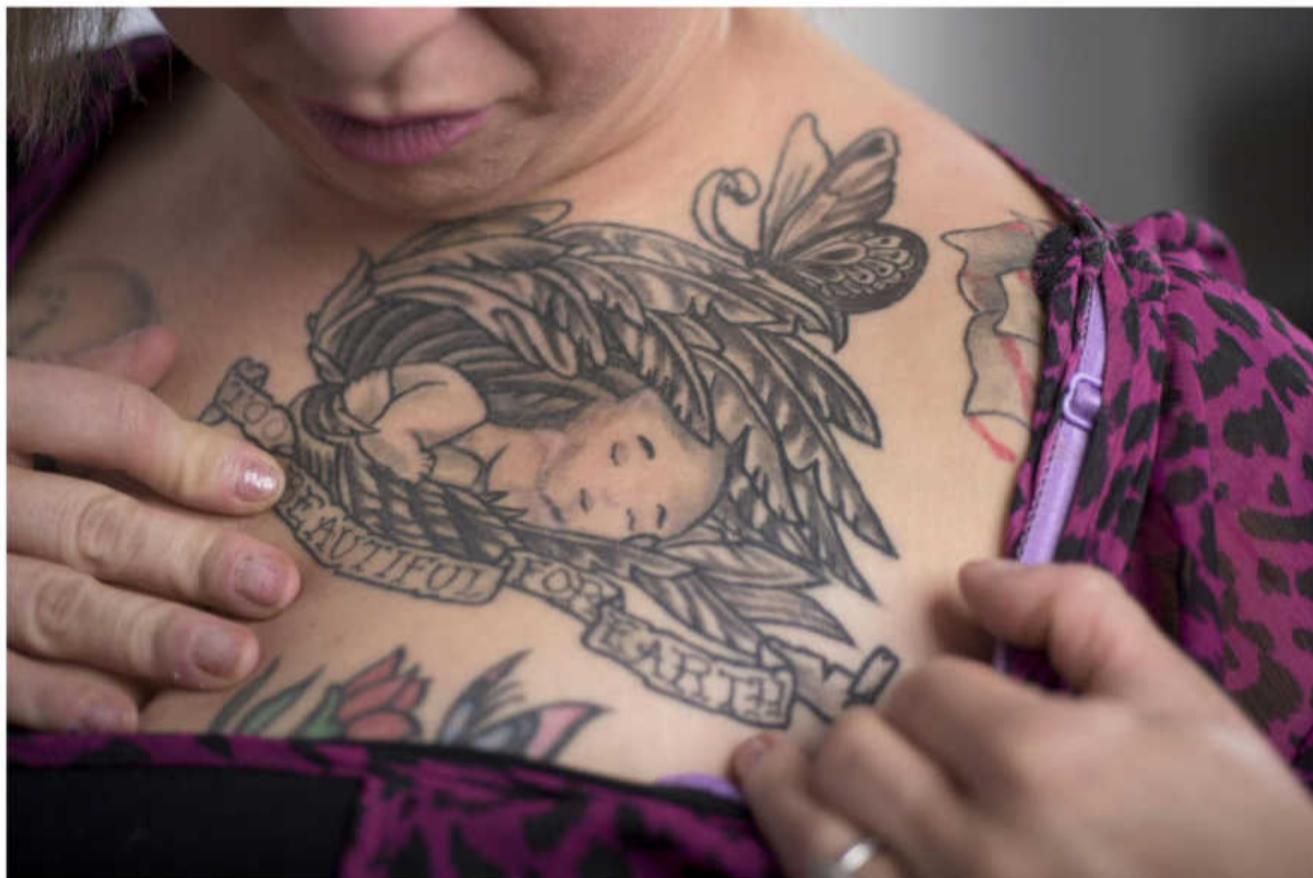
Knight choked back those same fears, day after day, for the next 11 years.

Sadism Sells

Knight closes her eyes for a moment and tilts her head up toward the sun. When she opens them, she says, “Watching the clouds go by is so beautiful!” I follow her gaze and notice that the pale-blue sky is studded with delicate white wisps. It dawns on me that someone who was held captive for over a decade—raped, beaten, starved, chained and rarely let outside—would of course want to stop and watch the clouds float by.

We’re sitting outside a restaurant in downtown Cleveland. Knight, who’s 34 now, wears a magenta and

black-leopard-print blouse, dark jeans and pink lipstick. She gently pats her short blond hair and points to a meaty green animal tattooed around her right wrist. “This is a protection dragon,” she says. She raises her left sleeve and drops her shoulder, revealing five large roses cascading down her arm, each one covered in drops of blood. “Every rose is for every abortion that I had in the house.”



Knight shows some of her tattoos that depict part of what she went through while held captive in a house in Cleveland. Credit: Dustin Franz for Newsweek

It’s mid-June, just 10 days after the two-year anniversary of her rescue from Castro’s house. Since then, Knight legally changed her name to Lillian Rose Lee and has become an advocate for victims of abuse and violence. She’s also covered her body with tattoos. On her right shoulder, there is a brown teddy bear decorated with red hearts, a design she drew during captivity. On her chest, a baby and the phrase “Too beautiful for this Earth.” On her right calf, there’s a large face, part skeleton and part flesh. “This tattoo represents my life from the past and my life in the future. It says, ‘My heart is not chained to my situation.’” Knight often talks in quotes like this, especially when describing her life today—life after “the dude,” as she calls Castro, and the

nearly 4,000 days she spent trapped in his grotesque prison of abuse.



Knight has numerous tattoos related to her ordeal, including tributes to the children she lost during her 11 years of captivity in Castro's house. Credit:

Dustin Franz for Newsweek

From concentration camps to war experiences, history proves that people can survive unspeakable traumas. Yet there is no neat and tidy explanation as to how they do it. “Core elements are keeping hope up in some way: thinking about the future, and having something to occupy your mind so you’re not dwelling on it all the time,” says David Finkelhor, director of the **Crimes Against Children Research Center** at the University of New Hampshire. Some captives learn to dissociate or minimize what they’re going through. “Some of the defense mechanisms that are occasioned by trauma may help victims get through really horrific experiences,” says Dorchen Leidholdt, director of the Center for Battered Women’s Legal Services at Sanctuary for Families in New York. “But when they get out it can make it harder for them to heal and rebuild their lives.”

Culturally, we are fascinated by these modern-day Brothers Grimm fairy tales—the details of capture, the

sadistic acts of violence, the complete and utter subjugation. But we are largely uninterested in their aftermath. Recovery, which presents a deluge of challenges (post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, substance abuse, chronic health conditions, abusive relationships and subsequent victimization), is far less uplifting than rescue, justice and restoring order to the world. “We want to believe that stories of kidnapping and captivity end, like the Disney version of Rapunzel, happily ever after,” says Bruce Shapiro, executive director of the [Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma](#) at the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism. “But life after captivity can be harrowing too. We don't really want to know about that, because in a way, that's more frightening.”

There is a cohort of women who know exactly how terrifying recovery can be. They are members of a society they never wanted to join, because membership meant enduring harrowing traumas and surviving to tell their stories. The names evoke some of the most hideous captivity tales on record. There’s Jaycee Dugard, who, in 1991, was abducted while walking to a bus stop in South Lake Tahoe, California. Convicted sex offender Phillip Garrido and his wife, Nancy, held 11-year-old Dugard for 18 years in a makeshift compound of sheds and tents behind their house, where Phillip repeatedly raped Dugard and where she gave birth to two children.



Ariel Castro, 53, sits between his attorneys Jaye Schlachet, right, and Craig Weintraub in the courtroom with a model of Castro's home presented as an exhibit in court, August 1, 2013. The Cleveland school bus driver who abducted, imprisoned and repeatedly raped three women was sentenced to life in prison without parole, plus 1,000 years. Credit: Aaron Josefczyk/Reuters

Elizabeth Smart was 14 when, in 2002, Brian David Mitchell plucked her from her bedroom in Salt Lake City and kept her for nine months at a nearby campsite, raping her daily. In Austria, Natascha Kampusch spent eight years of her childhood imprisoned in a cellar. For 24 years, Elisabeth Fritzl's father stashed her in a basement dungeon, where he raped her and fathered seven children. And then there's Knight, whose torture was so brutal that, as Cuyahoga County Prosecutor Timothy McGinty puts it, "no one went through what [she] went through, barring the Korean or Vietnam prisoners, and they didn't go through it as long."

These stories are so darkly fascinating that many have been adapted into books, movies and TV shows. A Lifetime Original Movie, [Cleveland Abduction](#), based on Knight's story, aired in May. The two other women Castro abducted, Amanda Berry and Gina DeJesus, co-authored [Hope: A](#)

Memoir of Survival in Cleveland. Smart wrote **My Story**. Dugard penned **A Stolen Life: A Memoir**. All four books became New York Times best-sellers. Kampusch recounted her ordeal in **3,096 Days in Captivity**, and she, Smart and Dugard were also the subjects of TV movies and films.

Hollywood loves to glamorize torture and sexual violence, from ripped-from-the-headlines tales to the 1991 thriller *The Silence of the Lambs*, about an FBI trainee (Jodie Foster) interviewing a brilliant psychiatrist turned cannibalistic psychopath, and Liam Neeson hunting down sex traffickers in *Taken*. And that makes it even harder to identify with real-life survivors of real-life cases. Perhaps for good reason: “None of us wants to imagine ourselves as that vulnerable,” Shapiro says. “We say, ‘They must have been implicated in their captivity in some way.’ Or we focus for five minutes on the sensational details and the trial and then stop thinking about it.”

It’s a lot easier to focus on women like Knight when they’re rescued—when their futures are filled with opportunity—than a few years later, when the sparkling promise of being saved may have given way to personal or professional struggles, or depression, or worse.

Recovery for the victims of these monsters is a lifelong maze, sometimes without a very bright light at the end. Survivors like Knight rarely have the chance to talk to someone who truly understands—from personal experience—the extended, twisted degradation they endured. Some are left dangling from a precipice that we’d rather not help them scale, either because we simply don’t know how to or because it’s easier to pretend they aren’t dangling at all.

Sleeping in a Blue Garbage Can

Before Knight wandered into that Family Dollar store and accepted a ride from Castro, she had already survived a childhood mired in hardships. She grew up in a frenetic haze of poverty and filth, where school was an afterthought, soap and toothpaste were luxuries, and Pop-Tarts and SpaghettiOs

were as nutritious as things got. She and her younger twin brothers, Eddie and Freddie, spent about a year living in a brown station wagon, and when their parents—who she says rarely held steady jobs—finally moved the family into a house, it was in a neighborhood crawling with prostitutes and drug dealers. They moved often, and with each new home came a revolving door of relatives, roommates and strangers.

“I have very few happy memories of my childhood,” Knight says. She goes silent, as if searching for something she even wants to remember. “Playing with my brothers. Running around. Tag was our favorite game.”

In school, Knight was teased incessantly, but life at home was worse: A male family member started molesting her when she was 5 years old, and the abuse escalated over the years from a couple of times a week to almost daily. “It’s like I was buried six feet under and screaming and nobody can hear a thing,” she says.



Michelle Knight reads a statement in court during the trial for Ariel Castro, right, in Cleveland, Ohio, August 1, 2013. She described her time in his captivity as 11 years of hell. Credit: Aaron Josefczyk/Reuters

Knight ran away when she was 15. She slept in a blue garbage can beneath an underpass until she fell in with a marijuana dealer who traded her a room for her work as a drug runner. “I didn’t think about what was gonna happen to me out there—how I could get killed or raped again. I thought, This is my way out.”

Yet Knight was never very far from home. When a neighbor spotted her and told her father, he dragged her back to their house. The very next night, the same family member raped her again.

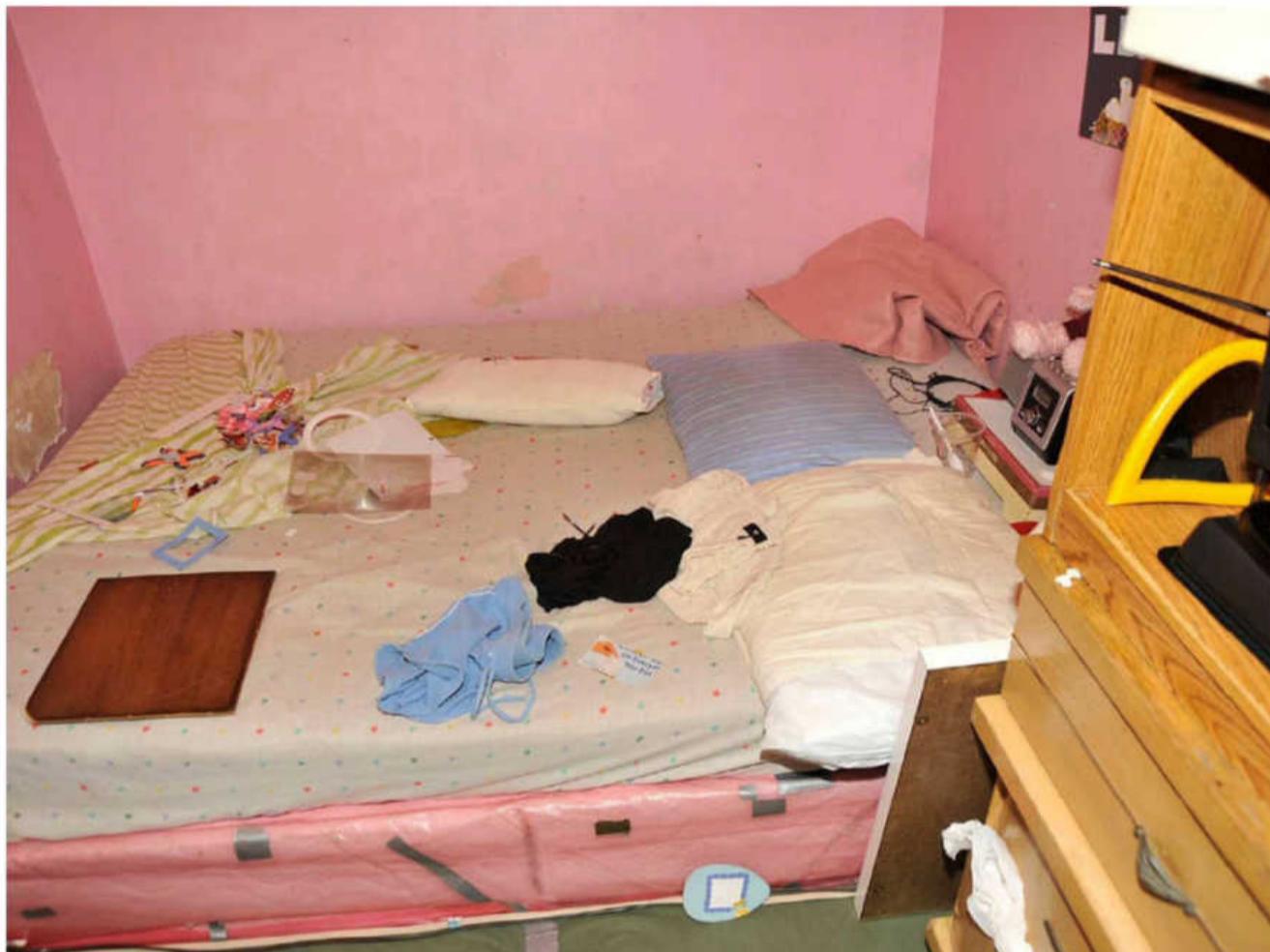
Knight passed into ninth grade but hated everything about school: The kids were mean, she was failing her classes, and she constantly felt “stupid.” In her sophomore year, she got pregnant by a guy at school. She never told him, nor did she consider having an abortion. “Having my son was one of my happiest memories in my life,” she says of Joey, who was born in October 1999. “Just seeing his

little 10 fingers and toes, and seeing how beautiful he was. He's a gift."

When the boyfriend of Knight's mother broke Joey's leg, Knight watched helplessly as social services took away the one good thing in her life. She was 21. She didn't have a job or a car. She'd dropped out of high school. She was being molested at home and had no family support. How would she ever get her son back? "It's still a little difficult to talk about, even though it happened a ways back," she whispers. "The day that I disappeared, I didn't know that I was gonna be spending 11 years in a house full of torture, hell, chained up to poles, hanged from ceilings. I didn't know any of this was gonna happen. I was walking to go get my son back."

Raped Six Times a Day

Knight hung between those two poles in the pink bedroom for about a month. Castro would come home from work, lower her onto the floor, rape and beat her, and then, "Shoooo! Right back up," she says. "Oh my God, I felt so nasty. I felt sticky. I burned. I itched. I couldn't scratch. I was crying repeatedly. I was numb. I felt in so much pain."



A room in Ariel Castro's house is seen in this undated photo provided to the court as evidence on August 1, 2013. Credit: Cuyahoga County Prosecutor's Office/Reuters

One day, Castro dragged her into the basement, a stinking hovel of junk, clothes and boxes. He sat her on the floor, stuck another sock in her mouth and wrapped rusted chains around her neck and stomach, securing her body against a pole. Then he shoved a motorcycle helmet on her head.

“Let me see if I can give you an image,” Knight tells me, lowering herself onto the floor. We’re now sitting in a conference room at her lawyer’s office, and she pulls a chair up against the left side of her body and tells me to pretend it’s a speaker. There is a pole behind her, she says, then tilts her head backward and to the left into a position I can’t imagine holding for more than a few minutes. “This is how my body was. I kept passing in and out because being like that and having a chain and motorcycle helmet on your head, you couldn’t breathe, and if you did breathe, you had to breathe shallow.”



A helmet in Ariel Castro's house is seen in this undated photo provided to the court as evidence on August 1, 2013. Knight says she was forced to wear a motorcycle helmet while chained to a pole in the basement.

Credit: Cuyahoga County Prosecutor's Office/Reuters

Castro gave Knight a bucket to use as a toilet and tossed paper napkins at her when she had her period. Once a day, he brought her food from McDonald's. Eventually, he moved her to a bedroom on the second floor, where he took away her clothes and left her to freeze on a soiled mattress for months. He did not permit her to shower until after eight months of captivity. He brought her a puppy, but a few months later, he broke its neck in front of her. And he raped her again and again, sometimes six or seven times a day. Knight got pregnant five times during her 11 years in the house; Castro punched and starved her until she miscarried each one.

“I couldn’t emphasize enough how much pain it was. And how every day was pure torture: what he did, how

he did it or where he did it," Knight says. "It was hard to control my fear 'cause every day I thought I was gonna die. And if I didn't die, I was gonna be in pain."



The inside of Castro's basement, provided to the court as evidence on August 1, 2013. Castro held Knight here for months before he moved her upstairs. Credit: Cuyahoga County Prosecutor's Office/Reuters

The smallest luxuries became Knight's lifeline—green Dawn dishwashing liquid, which she used to brush her teeth, and the notebooks and pencils Castro brought her, which she used as a diary and sketch pad. When he put a radio and small TV in her bedroom, she finally caught up on the

world: Michael Jackson suspended his baby over a balcony! Kelly Clarkson became the first winner on American Idol! Elizabeth Smart was found alive!

In April 2003, Knight was watching TV when she saw a report about a local Cleveland girl named Amanda Berry. She was 16 years old, and she'd gone missing. Soon after, Knight heard Castro blasting loud music from the basement. She had a dreaded hunch: He had someone else trapped down there, and it was probably Berry.

The first time she saw Berry was when Castro brought her into the pink bedroom and declared, "This is my brother's girlfriend." Knight remembers locking eyes with Berry and trading silent, terrified looks. For months after that, the two young women rarely saw each other. But Knight sensed that Castro preferred Berry—he let her sleep in the bigger room, gave her the color TV and permitted her to wear clothes while Knight went naked.

A year later, 14-year-old Gina DeJesus arrived. Castro chained her and Knight together in a second-floor bedroom. Sometimes he'd rape one of them on one side of the bed while the other one lay there, helpless. "Just to see it happen right in front of you, it's like, Damn, what am I gonna do?" Knight says. "The only thing in my head is, I grab her hand to say, 'Everything's gonna be all right.'" Knight sometimes begged Castro to rape her instead of DeJesus.



According to Knight, Castro had chains and locks scattered around his house and used them to restrain her and the other two women. Credit: Cuyahoga County Prosecutor's Office/Reuters

Year after year, Castro's hideous abuse continued. He let Berry and DeJesus watch news coverage of the vigils their families held, and told Knight no one was looking for her. He forced Knight to eat a hot dog smothered in mustard, fully aware that she was fiercely allergic to the condiment and pregnant for the fifth time. All the while, he played bass in a local band and entertained friends at his house. Early on in her captivity, when Knight was still chained up in the basement with that helmet over her head, she heard a handful of men talking in Spanish upstairs. Then there was music and singing. “Even if I could have let out a scream from under that helmet, there was no way any of those guys could hear me. The music was way too loud, and I was too far away from them,” she wrote in her memoir. “As best as I could tell, those guys came over just about every Saturday.” Yet no one—not neighbors, police or even

Castro's own family—had a clue about the evil universe he'd painstakingly built inside.

Knight did anything she could to make it to the next day. She wrote poetry and drew pictures, dreamed of Arby's fries with hot sauce and constantly thought about her Joey. DeJesus, too, became a reason to live. "We used to sit there and, when he leaves [the house], just blast the music and try to make the best of it by singing, dancing, trying to do something halfway.... Something we know everybody else is doing," Knight says of the years she spent trapped in a room with DeJesus. "Adele's 'Skyfall'—me and Gina used to sing it when we were down and out, how we were gonna stick together and see through it all."

On Christmas Day in 2006, Castro took a fourth captive: his daughter. Berry gave birth to a baby girl in a plastic kiddie pool Castro placed on a mattress. He forced Knight to help with the delivery, telling her, "If this baby doesn't come out alive, I'm going to kill you." When the newborn turned blue, Knight performed mouth-to-mouth resuscitation until she started breathing again. Then Castro forced her to help dispose of the blood.

Berry's daughter, Jocelyn, became the darling of the house—a reason for the three captives to survive. Castro gradually loosened his rules. He nicknamed Jocelyn "Pretty," let her roam around the house and occasionally took her to local parks and even to church. As the years went by, he brought home children's books, Barney flash cards and toys. When Jocelyn got old enough to question the "**bracelets**" her mother wore, he stopped locking up Berry with chains. Eventually, he did the same for Knight and DeJesus.

'Daddy's Gone!'

On May 6, 2013, Knight woke up hungry and bored, fearing, as always, whatever Castro had in store for her that day. She and DeJesus were sitting in their room. Knight started sketching roses in her notebook. At some

point, they turned on the radio, and she remembers hearing Nickelback's "Someday":

How the hell'd we wind up like this? Why weren't we able To see the signs that we missed Try and turn the tables?

(In the memoir DeJesus wrote with Berry, DeJesus recalls that she and Knight were watching a Hilary Duff movie on TV. But Knight told me that she remembered their TV was broken at the time. This contradiction is not at all surprising; experts say trauma survivors will remember some parts of their ordeal in extraordinary detail yet have no recollection of other aspects of what happened to them. For the purposes of this article, I have followed Knight's account.)

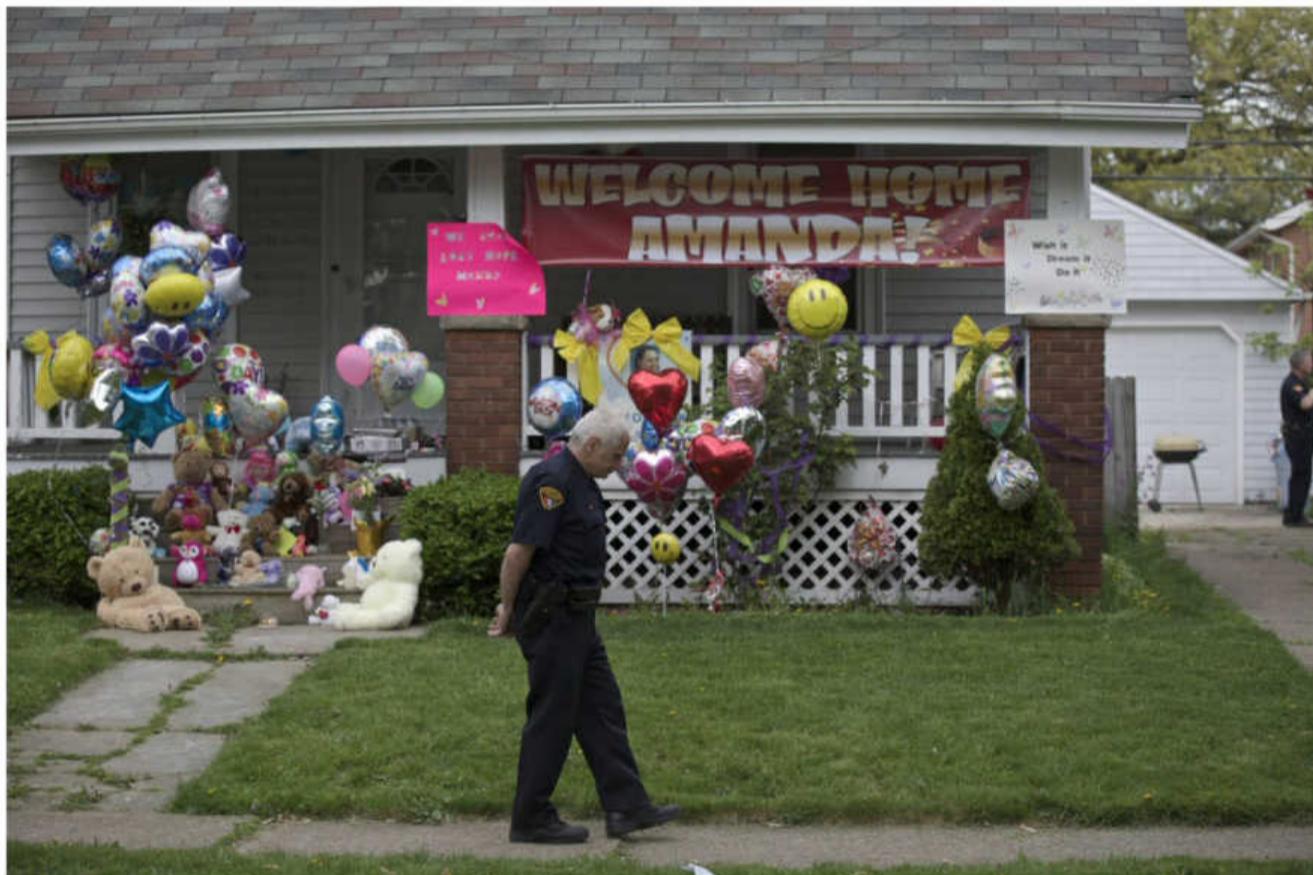
Suddenly, they heard Jocelyn's little feet pitter-patter upstairs and into Berry's room. "Daddy's gone! Daddy's gone!" she shouted.

"In my head I'm saying, 'Yeah right, another test,'" Knight says, referring to the countless times Castro left the women unchained or unlocked their doors, only to be lurking in another room, waiting to pounce if they tried to escape.

Next, Knight heard Berry's bedroom door swing open and feet shuffling downstairs. About 15 minutes later, there were pounding and kicking noises from the first floor. "We either thought we were being broken into or [Berry and Castro] got into a fight," Knight says. "Then we hear, 'Police! Police!' I told Gina that anybody could say police. You never know. So we're just sittin' there. I tell her to go hide. I'll go check. At first I didn't know the door was unlocked at all. I turned it. I was like, 'Gina, door's unlocked, dude!' I closed it again 'cause I got scared."

Knight and DeJesus had no idea that after Jocelyn ran upstairs shouting "Daddy's gone! Daddy's gone!," Berry went down to investigate. She discovered that Castro had left the house and forgotten to bolt one of the doors. She opened it, only to find the storm door locked. She screamed until a

neighbor helped her kick a hole in the bottom big enough for her and Jocelyn, then 6 years old, to squeeze out. They ran to a nearby house and called 911: “Hello, police? Help me! I’m Amanda Berry!” she said. “I’ve been kidnapped and I’ve been missing for 10 years and I’m here; I’m free now!”



A Cleveland police officer is present outside the home of Amanda Berry's sister in Cleveland, Ohio, May 8, 2013. Amanda Berry, free less than two days from a decade of captivity with two other women in a Cleveland house, arrived at her sister's home, where her family pleaded for privacy. Credit: John Gress/Reuters

But while waiting in her bedroom prison, Knight couldn’t help but wonder whether the voices and noises they heard were part of yet another one of Castro’s elaborate tricks. Then Knight saw a real, live police officer walking toward her. She hurled herself into his arms. “I literally felt like I was choking him, like I was hugging the life out of him,” she says. “He hands me off to the other officer, and that’s when, at the time, Gina was still in the bedroom. I was like, ‘Gina, Gina, we’re going home!’”

Knight followed the officer downstairs. When she stepped outside, the sun was so bright it burned her eyes. She looked down at what she was wearing—a grimy white

T-shirt and a pair of dark pants Castro had found at a yard sale—and felt embarrassed. She was also nauseated and dizzy, and her chest hurt. “Then I felt a cold breeze coming through my nasty, dirty hair. And then I was like, This is real.”

‘Your Hell Is Just Beginning’

It had been 11 years since anyone had seen Knight alive, 10 for Berry and nine for DeJesus, and their improbable rescue captured the attention of the entire world. “We were in a state of shock for a long time,” says McGinty, the county prosecutor. “We couldn’t believe it, that they were under our noses—right there!” Berry’s and DeJesus’s disappearances received airtime on *The Oprah Winfrey Show* and *The Montel Williams Show*, inspired heartfelt vigils and led to police task forces. When the two women were released from the hospital, journalists and photographers flocked to their homes and recorded every balloon, stuffed animal and cheer from the crowd.

“The sad part is, no one was looking for Michelle,” McGinty says. While Knight had been reported missing in 2002, the Cleveland police **removed** her missing person entry from an FBI database 15 months later. For the 11 years she was abducted, her case received hardly any publicity. Knight’s grandmother, Deborah, **told** *The Plain Dealer* that the family assumed she’d run away after losing custody of Joey, but after Knight was rescued, her mother, Barbara, **said** she’d hung fliers around the city after her daughter disappeared and continued searching even after the police gave up. Barbara, who moved to Florida during Knight’s captivity, also painted a very different picture of Michelle’s childhood, claiming her daughter helped her grow a vegetable garden and loved doting on puppies and feeding apples to a neighbor’s pony.

To all of this, Michelle says, “My mother all the time came up with fake stories.” She alleges that Barbara kept her home from school, prohibited her from having friends

and forced her to stay inside, all so she could collect Supplemental Security Income. “She made sure that I was dumber than a doorknob just to get the SSI money. But I’m not dumb,” Knight said on the Dr. Phil show.

McGinty backs up Michelle’s claims. “[Her mother] was getting Social Security money for disabilities, and all those years they forgot to tell the federal government Michelle was missing. They forgot all about her and moved to Florida and were riding her like a pension,” he says. “She didn’t spend much time protecting her child. The only reason I didn’t prosecute her was...it would have traumatized Michelle more.”



Ariel Castro listens to his attorney Craig Weintraub during Castro's sentencing for kidnapping, rape and murder in Cleveland, Ohio, August 1, 2013. Credit: Aaron Josefczyk/Reuters

Castro pleaded guilty to 937 criminal counts, including kidnapping, rape and aggravated murder, and was sentenced to life in prison without parole, plus 1,000 years. Knight was the only survivor who chose to speak at his sentencing hearing. Wearing a gray and black dress and wire-frame glasses, she walked past Castro to the front of the courtroom, brushed back her bangs and said, “I spent 11 years in hell,

and now your hell is just beginning. I will overcome all this that happened, but you will face hell for eternity.” To this day, she has yet to see Joey, who was adopted by a family during Knight’s captivity; his adoptive parents have sent Knight photos, but they feel he’s too young to know the truth about her.

A month after his sentencing, Castro was found dead in his cell, hanging from his bedsheet with his pants and underwear around his ankles. It was ruled a suicide, and McGinty told the press, “This man couldn’t take, for even a month, a small portion of what he had dished out for more than a decade.”

‘Nobody Was Lookin’ for Me Either’

Knight cradles an iPhone in her hands as if it’s a wounded bird. “Hello!” she says at the screen. “How are you?”

Smiling back at her is Elaine Cagle. She’s 48 years old, lives in Wilmington, North Carolina, and her dirty blond hair falls loosely around her shoulders. For years, she has followed Knight’s story from afar, not out of detached fascination but because she, too, survived more than a decade of trauma. This is their first time “meeting.”



Elaine Cagle, seen on a video chat, shared her story of traumatic abuse with Knight, who is reaching out to fellow survivors, hoping to help them find strategies for rebuilding their lives. Credit: Dustin Franz for Newsweek

“I’m...good,” Cagle says tentatively. For a moment, neither of them speaks. Then Cagle finds her words: “I actually found out about you when you first was taken,” she says. “That’s when my heart broke, because after going through what I went through, my mind just raced. Because I knew what I had been through, and I knew that”—she pauses—“nobody was lookin’ for me either. And whenever”—she pauses again—“you were found, I was like, ‘Well, thank God.’ So, anyway...” Her voice tightens. “I didn’t read your book, I’m really sorry, because I couldn’t bring myself to do it.”

“That’s OK, sweetie,” Knight says.

“But I did watch your movie,” Cagle says, referring to Lifetime’s Cleveland Abduction. “It was really hard. I really did feel the connection.”

“Take a breath,” Knight says, nervously giggling.

“About me, what happened to me. Is this what you wanna know?”

“Yeah,” Knight says quietly.

Cagle takes a deep breath, blinks and begins: “When I was 3, I watched...a man”—she stops and looks away from the screen—“murder my father. And then I was placed in a foster home, and I was there for almost 10 years, where I was tortured mentally and physically, and sexually abused, and used as a slave. My foster parents’ brother was, um, he, um, sexually abused me for almost 10 years. And at night they would lock me in a room and make me use the bucket under the bed [as a toilet]. And they would use a razor strap and beat me. And a horsewhip. And they would wake me up in the morning, and with a wire coat hanger they beat me on the feet. They told me that whenever I came of age, I was gonna marry this guy. It was crazy. It was torture every single day.”

“Oh my God,” Knight whispers.

“There was a whole lot more to it, but that’s the reason why I could so relate to you,” Cagle says. “Because then they tied me to a tree and beat me and left me there for days. They ended up putting me somewhere else where I was even more abused. So...” She lets out what sounds like a lifetime of pent-up air.

Knight stares at the screen, fighting back tears.



Knight breaks down while talking to Elaine Cagle via video chat on June 16 in Cleveland. Like Lee, Cagle also was held captive for over ten years and was beaten, raped and tortured. Credit: Dustin Franz for Newsweek

I first spoke with Cagle in March 2015, and in May, after a handful of hourlong telephone interviews, I asked whether she'd be interested in meeting Knight. She went silent. Through the phone, I heard a sniffle and a sigh: "That sounds great!" she said. "I would really like to talk to her." Cagle knew all about Knight's ordeal. She'd followed the news over the years, read about the rescue and watched some of her TV appearances. "Something struck me with Michelle more than the other ones [Berry and DeJesus]. I couldn't put my finger on why," Cagle says. "I think she has a lot of courage.... Probably a lot more than me."

Every minute in the U.S., **24 people** are victims of rape, physical violence or stalking by an intimate partner. That's more than 12 million women and men a year—and these statistics lowball the problem, since many victims choose not to come forward. Some people, like Knight and Smart, gain a lot of public attention for surviving terrible things. But for every so-called famous survivor, there are many, many more who don't get any attention, yet they've

experienced something equally awful. Cagle is one of these anonymous survivors. And like many with her background of abuse, she trusts few people with her story and has struggled to find a sisterhood of women who understand why it can be so hard operating in the real world after spending most of one's childhood surviving a nightmare.

"It can be very risky to tell your story to people around you," says Frank Ochberg, a pioneering psychiatrist and trauma expert who served as an **expert witness** for the prosecution in the Castro trial. "They don't believe you. Or they pity you. Or they get angry with you. When a person like Michelle or Elaine finds someone who is willing to listen and absorb it and appreciate it, it's important and it's unusual."

During our first interview, I asked Cagle about her childhood. "Have you ever seen Roots?" she asked. I nodded. "OK, well, that was it, that was me. [My foster parents] didn't want a child. They wanted slaves, and that's what we were." Cagle called her foster parents' house "the homestead," and said it didn't have running water, indoor plumbing or electricity. To get there, one had to walk a mile down a dirt road. Every day, Cagle said, she was forced to work in the tobacco fields, and every night she was either locked in her room or sent to her "uncle's" house, where he sexually abused her. She never had shoes and never saw a doctor.



On the one-year anniversary of their escape, Amanda Berry, right, and Georgina DeJesus are honored at the annual National Center for Missing and Exploited Children's Hope Awards dinner in Washington, May 6, 2014.

Credit: Cliff Owen/AP

“I have people say, ‘Why didn’t you just run away?’” Cagle tells Knight during their video chat. “I look at ’em and say, ‘Run away where? We were in the custody of the state! They’re just gonna take us right back to the situation where we were at. There was nowhere to run to.’”

Knight says, “I have a lot of people asking me the same question: ‘Why didn’t I escape from the house?’ It’s kinda hard when you’re chained up!”

“Yeah and you’ve got someone cowering over you with a big whip, and you’re in the middle of nowhere,” Cagle says.

“Yes!” Knight says. “I can see where you come from, because even though the neighbors were so close, it was still difficult for us to get away. It’s like, once we tried, we got knocked right back down.”

“Yeah, that’s the mind games,” Cagle says. “Mmmmm. The mind games.”

Knight tells her about the time Castro gave her a puppy and then killed it. “I thought it was a beginning to an end. Like, he was actually starting to be nice, but it was another one of his head games: ‘I’m gonna give you something precious, and then I’m gonna rip it away from you just to watch you break.’”

Cagle replies with a story about how her foster parents locked her in an “old-timey wardrobe” for hours at a time. “They would say, ‘You’re a heathen! Sit in there and think about what you’ve done wrong. And you better pray to God. By the time we unlock this wardrobe, you better figure out what you’ve done wrong.’”



Knight is given a hug by a stranger on the street in Cleveland. She says that people recognize and come up to her all the time giving her love and support. Credit: Dustin Franz for Newsweek

“And you wouldn’t have a clue,” Knight says.

“I was a little child!” Cagle says. “I would sit in there and just be beside myself, just wondering, What did I do wrong?” Cagle is fighting back tears. “Then I would come out. ‘Well, did you figure it out?’ And if it wasn’t right, they would beat me and tell me how horrible I was.”

“It’s kinda like my mom and my dad telling me that I was worthless, that I wouldn’t amount to anything, that I wasn’t beautiful,” Knight says.

“Oh, yeah, I heard that every day too.”

“Stuff happens in life that you can’t control, but at least you know now that you’ve got control over your own life,” Knight says. “Whatever you do to make it happy now means more than anything in the world.”

Cagle listens, her eyes glistening.

“So how you feeling?” Knight asks, smiling.

Cagle lets loose a big, weepy sigh. “Well...I feel like I’ve basically emotionally puked all over you!”

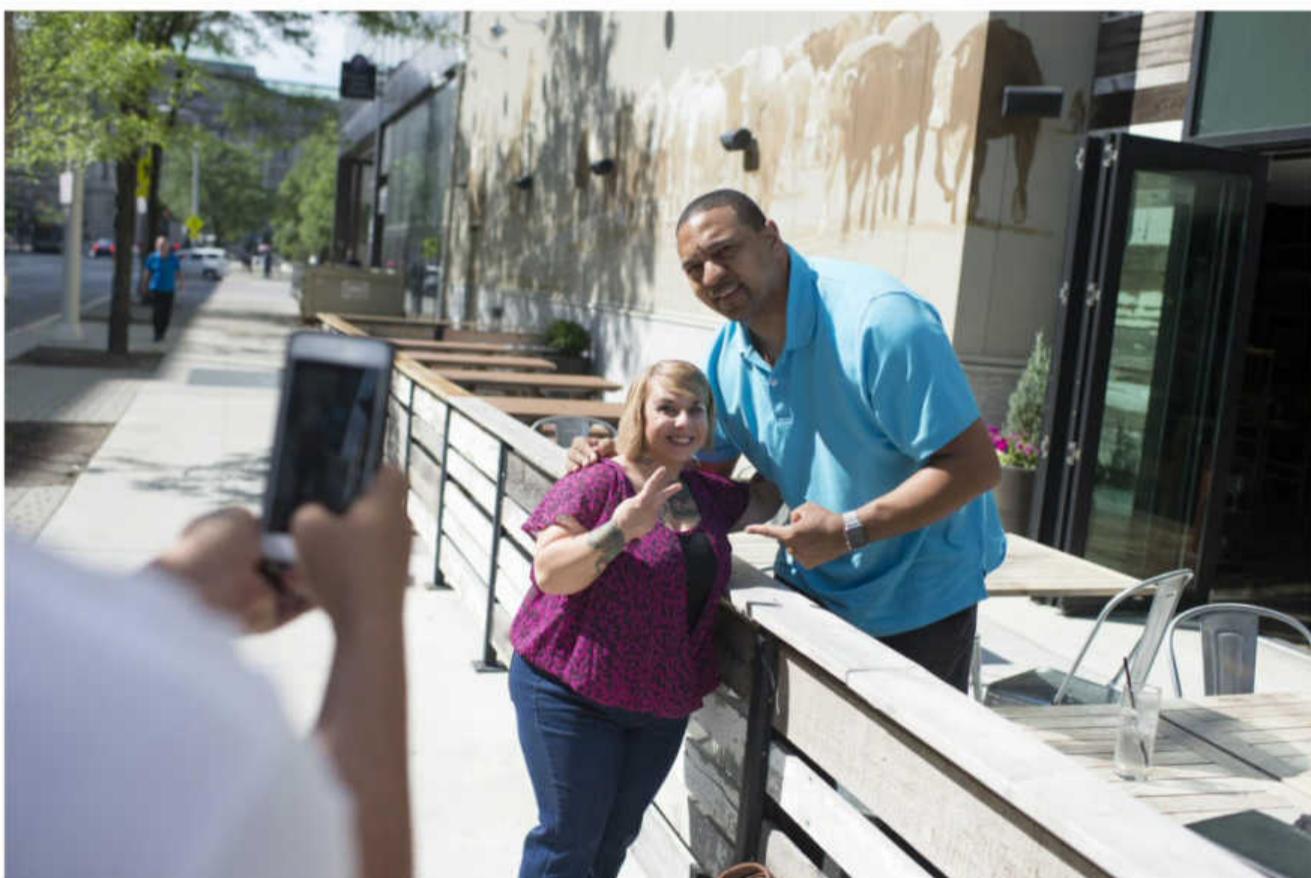
“That’s good! That’s good!” Knight says, laughing.

“You’re feeling some type of feeling, and that’s really good. This is the hardest part for a person that went through what we went through: We do not want to talk about it with a person that don’t know nothing about it.”

Cagle says she spent eight years living with her foster parents before she was moved to a children’s home, then sent back to live with her mother. Life there wasn’t much better. She says her mother left her alone with a man who forced her to play Russian roulette. “My mom had such a drug habit that she pimped me out!” According to Cagle, her mother and both foster parents are dead. In her 20s, Cagle put herself through college, earning a degree in basic law enforcement training at North Carolina’s Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College and pursued careers as a volunteer firefighter with the West Buncombe Fire Department, phlebotomist at Mission Hospital in Asheville and deputy sheriff in the Buncombe County Sheriff’s Office . She also briefly served in the Army Reserve. “I’m really crying on the inside. It’s like, Dang. Jeez! I’m disabled now. I don’t do anything. I’ve had so many health problems it isn’t even funny,” she says. After suffering a panic attack during her stint as a police officer,

she was diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder. She also suffers from agoraphobia. Through it all, her wife, Deborah Cagle, has been a loving, supportive constant. They met 14 years ago, entered into a civil union in 2004 and legally married in 2010.

Knight, too, faces serious health problems, from nerve damage in her arm to chronically cold hands caused by bad blood flow and deteriorating eyesight. She'll likely never be able to have children. And she has yet to see Joey again. "As bad as Gina and Amanda had it, and they had it bad, when Michelle came out, she couldn't even be reunited with her own child. That's awful!" McGinty says. "Lawyers told her, 'You wanna fight, we'll put up a fight, we'll get visitation.' But she realized it would be too disruptive of that child's life.... That's the ultimate sacrifice to me. So her torture went on."



Knight, who is widely recognized in public now, poses with NBA commentator Mark Jackson in Cleveland. Credit: Dustin Franz for Newsweek

Knight wants to go back to school, but not just yet. First, she's taking an almost schizophrenic approach to her future and trying a little bit of everything: gardening, cooking,

nesting at home, writing music. In May, she recorded her first single, “[Survivor](#).” She’s been in therapy and, over the past two years, overcome her fears of ropes, chains and helmets. “I was even able to ride a motorcycle!” she says. She dedicates much of her time to helping other survivors. This year, she spoke at the [Cleveland Rape Crisis Center](#), the [Northeast Ohio Amber Alert Committee](#) and the [Purple Project Foster Care Youth Conference](#). (She earns a living through her public appearances, along with financial support from the [Cleveland Courage Fund](#), which raised over \$1.2 million to support Knight, DeJesus, Berry and her daughter.) On her [Facebook page](#), Knight shares updates from her life and offers advice to other survivors of abuse.

“I love helping people and seeing the smile on their face even when they feel down,” she tells Cagle. “It lets me know that I’m worth something.... People don’t understand how our lives are and how we can contribute a lot and help people. They see us as a disease. Like a drug addict. They see us and they label us, and they don’t realize we are just as human as everyone else.”

“Thank you,” Cagle says. “Thank you.”

Knight turns and looks at me, her voice getting higher as she talks. “I want people to know that I’m not just a story they threw on TV. I’m a person that has real feelings, just like her, that wants to be heard and wants their story to be out there.” She takes a deep breath, sniffles and looks back at Cagle, who’s crying and smiling.

“They were raised by wolves,” Ochberg says of Knight and Cagle. “But when a survivor has a sense that enough people understand that this did happen and that she has dignity and deserves honor rather than pity, anger or disbelief—when she finds enough people who can give her that kind of reflection—she can heal.”



Brendan Smialowski/AFP/Getty

WHY IS THE FBI TRYING TO BURY A SPECIAL FORCES WAR HERO?

**LIEUTENANT COLONEL JASON AMERINE EXPOSED HOW
THE BUREAU HAS BOTCHED HOSTAGE NEGOTIATIONS
WITH THE TALIBAN AND ISIS.**

Lieutenant Colonel Jason Amerine was one of the first U.S. soldiers into Afghanistan. He landed there with an Army Special Forces A-Team in late October 2001, when everyone agreed the war would be brief and the objectives were clear: Avenge the terror of the 9/11 attacks, depose the

Taliban and leave. Nearly 14 years later, he went to Capitol Hill to explain why he's still fighting his way out.



Lt. Col. Jason Amerine waits to testify before the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee hearing entitled: "Blowing the Whistle on Retaliation: Accounts of Current and Former Federal Agency Whistleblowers" on June 11 in Washington. Credit: Susan Walsh/AP

Until this past January, Amerine worked at the Pentagon, where he led an Army team ordered to bring home Sergeant Bowe Bergdahl, a mission that was expanded to include several civilian hostages held by Taliban-aligned militants in Pakistan. Bergdahl had been captive for nearly four years by the time Amerine got involved, making him the longest-held prisoner of war since Vietnam and a key to any end-of-war negotiations. In 2013, Amerine lured the Taliban to a series of secret talks that identified a solution, but then hit a wall in Washington's bureaucratic maze. As he wrangled more with federal agencies in D.C. than with the Quetta Shura in Pakistan, Amerine reached out to Representative Duncan Hunter, a Marine veteran and Republican member of the House Armed Services Committee.

Hunter wrote letters to then-Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel and President Barack Obama pleading that someone cut through the interagency squabbling between the Army, the State Department, the FBI, the intelligence community and the Department of Defense. When Bergdahl was finally released last year in a trade for five Taliban prisoners at Guantanamo Bay, Hunter complained that a far better deal brokered by Amerine was ignored. Worse still, six Western civilians, including two Canadians and a newborn child, were left behind, held by terrorist groups protected by the Pakistani government, a pivotal U.S. ally in the global war on terror.

This January, the day after an errant CIA drone missile killed one of those hostages, international aid worker Warren Weinstein, Amerine was abruptly escorted out of the Pentagon. The Army informed him that its Criminal Investigation Command (CID) had opened a case against him. His pay was halted, and his retirement was put on hold. Hunter says this was a hit job by the FBI, payback for infringing on the bureau's hostage-recovery turf. The CID would not comment on the case for Newsweek, and the FBI redirected questions back to the Defense Department. Meanwhile, the hostages remain in Pakistan, the investigation of Amerine drags on, and an internal Pentagon investigation is investigating the CID's investigation.

Testifying in June at a Senate hearing with the contorted title, "Blowing the Whistle on Retaliation: Accounts of Current and Former Federal Agency Whistleblowers," Amerine did not relish his rebel status. "I am labeled a whistleblower, a term both radioactive and derogatory," he said. "I am before you because I did my duty, and you need to ensure all in uniform can go on doing their duty without fear of reprisal."

'Let's End This War'

On the morning of September 11, 2001, Army Captain Amerine was walking into a pizzeria in Almaty, Kazakhstan. Osama bin Laden was the obvious suspect behind the day's atrocities, and by the end of that night, Amerine and the Green Berets under his command were mobilizing for war. They deployed the next month, making their rendezvous in Pakistan with Hamid Karzai, the future president of Afghanistan and an emerging leader of the country's southern Pashtun rebels.

Amerine's men faced a more difficult and dangerous situation than their Army counterparts in the north, who landed near Mazar-i-Sharif and rode horseback alongside the CIA-backed Northern Alliance. There was no organized resistance to the Taliban in the southern tribal belt. Kandahar, the country's second largest city, was the de facto capital under the Islamic Emirate, and the Americans expected a fierce battle over the city. Karzai told Amerine that if the Americans could help him liberate Tarin Kowt, the capital of Uruzgan Province about 80 miles north of Kandahar, it would strike an early blow to the Taliban's grip on the south.

Black Hawk helicopters dropped the Green Berets in hostile territory. To blend in and show respect for their new allies, they had grown out their beards and dispensed with the Army dress code. They covered their camouflage fatigues with fleece jackets and hoodies. The night they landed in Uruzgan, each man carried more than 200 pounds of weapons, supplies and gear.



Lt. Col. Jason Amerine meets with Hamid Karzai at the presidential palace in Kabul, Afghanistan on July 22, 2004. Amerine led one of the first and most important missions in the Afghan war: His team brought Karzai, the man the U.S. backed to lead his country after the overthrow of the Taliban, to the seat of power in Kabul. Credit: Jason Amerine

U.S. Army commanders wanted proof that Karzai could organize a force of at least 300 guerillas, and Amerine expected he would have weeks to rest his men and prepare for the first major battle. But less than 48 hours after the Green Berets were dropped into the rugged terrain, the people of Tarin Kowt unexpectedly rose up and killed their Taliban governor. Going on three days without sleep, Amerine's men had one option: Defend the town against a Taliban onslaught with help from just a few dozen Afghans with guns.

They staked out an observation post on a high plateau overlooking a wide valley and the distant mountain pass where the Taliban's counterattack would begin. It was an ideal perch, but when the Afghan guerillas saw the dust trails of so many Taliban trucks racing toward them, they turned

to run. “They basically started to panic,” Amerine told PBS in 2002. There were no interpreters, and the Afghans did not understand the capacity of the three F-18 fighter jets flying 30,000 feet overhead. “They didn’t know what we were actually about to bring down on the Taliban. So to them, we were crazy.”

Vastly outnumbered, the Green Berets called in air support from across the region. Fighter jets bombed and strafed the Taliban convoy, pickups exploding in flames one after the next until those remaining eventually turned in retreat. After Karzai’s guerrillas fended off a small-arms attack on the town’s rear flank, the battle was won. Were it not for the Americans, a local mullah told Karzai, the Taliban would have killed them all. With the Americans now clearing his path to power, Karzai and Amerine agreed on their shared objective: “Let’s get to Kandahar, and let’s end this war.”

The American-Afghan coalition was headed south, village by village, when disaster struck. On the morning of December 5, just outside the town of Shawali Kowt, an American B-52 that had received faulty coordinates dropped a 2,000-pound satellite-guided bomb directly on top of Amerine’s men. Three Green Berets and 27 Afghans were killed, and every man was wounded, including Amerine, who took shrapnel in his leg. Three days later, the supreme leader of the Taliban, Mullah Mohammed Omar, fled Kandahar on the back of a Honda motorcycle as the city fell to the coalition.

Amerine’s team earned three Silver Stars, seven Bronze Stars and 11 Purple Hearts. His story was immortalized in a New York Times best-seller, Eric Blehm’s *The Only Thing Worth Dying For*. In January 2002, he was invited as a guest of President George W. Bush to the first post-9/11 State of the Union address. He visited New York, rang the closing bell of the New York Stock Exchange and did interviews with CBS, Fox and CNBC. He returned to West Point to

teach international relations and Arabic to the young men who would take his place in the war. When he moved to Washington to work at the Pentagon, he received the orders that would derail his career.

Turf Wars Trump Real Wars

Then-Private Bergdahl had been stationed just 25 miles from the Pakistani border, and within two weeks of his disappearance there was overwhelming intelligence that he had been smuggled into Pakistan. Two days after he went missing, a regional Taliban commander, Mullah Sangeen Zadran, claimed him on behalf of the Haqqani network, one of the war's most relentless agents of mayhem. Kidnappings were the group's business model; just nine days before they acquired Bergdahl, they lost the man who had been their highest value hostage, New York Times writer David Rohde. Bergdahl took his place as the Taliban and Haqqani's most valuable prize of the war.

Bergdahl had fallen beyond Washington's reach. As an active serviceman, his safety was a Defense Department problem. But the U.S. military couldn't go into Pakistan. Any recovery mission, by legal and diplomatic necessity, had to be a CIA or Special Forces rescue ordered by the White House (such as Operation Neptune Spear, the 2011 raid on Osama bin Laden's compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan).

Amerine's team at the Pentagon began by conducting a thorough audit. "The reason the effort failed for four years," he told the Senate in June, "was because our nation lacked an organization that can synchronize the effort of all our government agencies to get our hostages home." His team "also realized that there were civilian hostages in Pakistan that nobody was trying to free, so we added them to our mission."

That last point was a not-so-subtle jab. Amerine's "nobody" was and is the FBI, the agency responsible for U.S. citizens kidnapped abroad. His Army team had access

to a vast human intelligence network the military had spent more than a decade assembling in central Asia, in countries where the FBI had little reach. He wasn't convinced the bureau was making progress, so he added the civilian cases, including two Canadians, to his recovery mission.

His team set three main goals: (1) Develop viable prisoner swap options, (2) bring the Taliban back to the negotiations and (3) fix the government's broken hostage recovery policy. On the first two, they made progress. Army intelligence reported that Bergdahl and the civilians had become a burden on their captors. In the spring of 2014, an unnamed Pentagon official told the Associated Press that the Taliban was "reaching out to make a deal" for the American soldier. But in Washington, federal agencies pursued different agendas, often in secret, sometimes at cross-purposes. And nothing got done.

"The Department of Defense, U.S. Central Command, the Joint Staff, U.S. Special Operations Command, the Department of State, the Central Intelligence Agency, the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the National Security Agency, among other government entities, are all involved in this operation," Hunter wrote to the president that spring. "It is essential that all government elements are working together in coordination."



Rep. Duncan D. Hunter, then a congressional candidate, meets with supporters at the Westgate Hotel in San Diego, Calif. on June 3, 2008. Hunter, a Marine vet on the Armed Services Committee, fought to end the turf battles impeding hostage negotiations. Credit: U-T San Diego/ZUMA Press

The coordination Hunter sought never came, so Amerine's team forged ahead on its own. It continued negotiations to release all seven hostages in exchange for just one Taliban-aligned drug kingpin, Haji Bashir Noorzai, who is serving a life sentence in U.S. federal prison.

Hunter advocated for the deal, telling the White House and Hagel that “the Department of Defense is best suited and best organized to lead all planning for Bergdahl’s release.” Officials at the State Department and the Pentagon assured Hunter that both agencies would “coordinate closely” on a “mutually reinforcing” process. “We will continue to keep you and your colleagues apprised of our efforts on [Bergdahl’s] behalf,” they wrote on May 6, 2014.

Their vows were quickly forgotten, and when Bergdahl was released on May 31 under terms much more favorable to the Taliban, Hunter received no prior notice. Instead of releasing Noorzai, a tribal leader with a long history of cooperating with American authorities (and who was lured

to New York under the premise of sharing information about terror financing and then detained by the Drug Enforcement Administration), the government released **five** Taliban detainees, two of whom had been military commanders.



President Barack Obama stands with Bob Bergdahl and Jani Bergdahl as he delivers a statement about the release of their son, Army Sergeant and prisoner of war Bowe Bergdahl, at the White House in Washington on May 31, 2014. Obama faced a knotty challenge in trying to free their son: Because he was being held in Pakistan, an ally in the war on terror, the U.S. military couldn't mount a rescue operation. Credit: Jonathan Ernst/Reuters

The ensuing political furor obsessed over the threat posed by the released Taliban prisoners and distracted from what had troubled Amerine and Hunter from the start: Six civilians remained in Pakistan, their hopes tied to the FBI, an agency with neither the resources nor the legal authority to operate in South Asia or to bring them home.

FBI Stumped by Facebook

Despite the fallout from the Bergdahl swap, the White House and FBI had been able to contain the news of a growing global hostage crisis. In late 2012 and early 2013, several Americans were captured by ISIS while trying to report on and deliver aid to war-ravaged Syria. As the

hostage cases multiplied and spread to the Mideast, so did the bureaucratic quagmire at home.

In May 2014, even as Hunter's office sounded the alarm on the gridlock that was preventing Bergdahl's release, the owner of *The Atlantic*, David Bradley, invited the parents of the ISIS hostages to his Georgetown home. Bradley thought he could help them navigate the bureaucratic maze, but according to a harrowing report by Lawrence Wright in *The New Yorker*, government agents stonewalled Bradley and the families at every turn. State Department officials threatened them with prosecution for talking to terrorist organizations, even as the FBI secretly attempted to do the same. The families were thwarted by a process seemingly more concerned with winning turf battles than recovering their children.

The FBI seemed particularly punitive. Wright reported episodes ranging from incompetence (FBI agents who claimed it was impossible to change a hostage's Facebook profile) to hopelessly mixed messages to parents. Solutions from anyone outside the government were discouraged and discontinued, no matter how much progress had been made.

This past December, the White House ordered a comprehensive review, and two weeks after Amerine's testimony on Capitol Hill it announced a policy overhaul. Presidential Policy Directive 30, known as "U.S. Nationals Taken Hostage Abroad and Personnel Recovery Efforts," is brutally honest in its assessment. "The government's handling of these hostage cases—and in particular its interaction and communication with families whose loved ones have been taken hostage—must improve."



Lt. Col. Jason Amerine rides in the back of a pickup truck in Tarin Kowt, Afghanistan on Dec. 1, 2001. Amerine is fighting for better handling of U.S. hostages held abroad by ISIS and the Taliban, but faces significant resistance from the FBI, who is nominally in charge of hostage retrieval.

Credit: Jason Amerine

The directive allows for outside efforts, whether from families or independent agents such as Bradley, and for the first time permits “private efforts to communicate with hostage-takers.” The White House established a Family Engagement Team and promises not to “abandon families in their greatest time of need.” Still, the nation’s zero-tolerance policy on ransoms will not change. The “Department of Justice does not intend to add to families’ pain in such cases,” but the government quietly retains the right to prosecute them for doing what it has secretly and repeatedly done on its own—pay ransoms to terrorist groups from Pakistan to the Philippines.

The White House review addresses some of Hunter’s critiques, namely with the rollout of a Hostage Recovery Fusion Cell, “a single, permanent U.S. government interagency body responsible for coordinating the recovery

of U.S. hostages abroad.” But the Fusion Cell will be housed within FBI headquarters, and Hunter assailed the changes as insufficient. “What’s being put forward is nothing more than window dressing,” he said. “Bottom line: The controversy regarding U.S. hostage policy started with the FBI and will likely continue with the FBI.” Hunter also claimed the FBI is behind Amerine’s current troubles. “Look no further than Army Lieutenant Colonel Jason Amerine...as a prime example of how the FBI retaliates against any interest that’s not their own.”

Two Senate committees led by Republicans—the Judiciary Committee under Chuck Grassley and the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs under Ron Johnson—are demanding answers from the FBI and Army to determine how this decorated combat veteran, one of the first heroes of the nation’s longest war, so suddenly acquired his pariah status. In a statement to Newsweek, Senator Johnson said the Pentagon “has yet to clearly articulate the scope of its investigation despite several requests from [his] committee.” Then, in a July 10 letter to Senator Grassley’s committee, the Pentagon confirmed Hunter’s allegations: The FBI was in fact the back-channel trigger.

Regardless of the outcome of the Army’s investigation, Amerine accomplished what his orders demanded: Bowe Bergdahl is alive and home. Amerine’s work with Hunter compelled the White House to re-evaluate its policies and will help the next, inevitable American hostages to follow. Warren Weinstein is dead (by friendly fire), but the prospects for getting the others home have improved. The Recovery Fusion Cell may be compromised by Washington’s eternal gamesmanship, but at least there is a Recovery Fusion Cell.



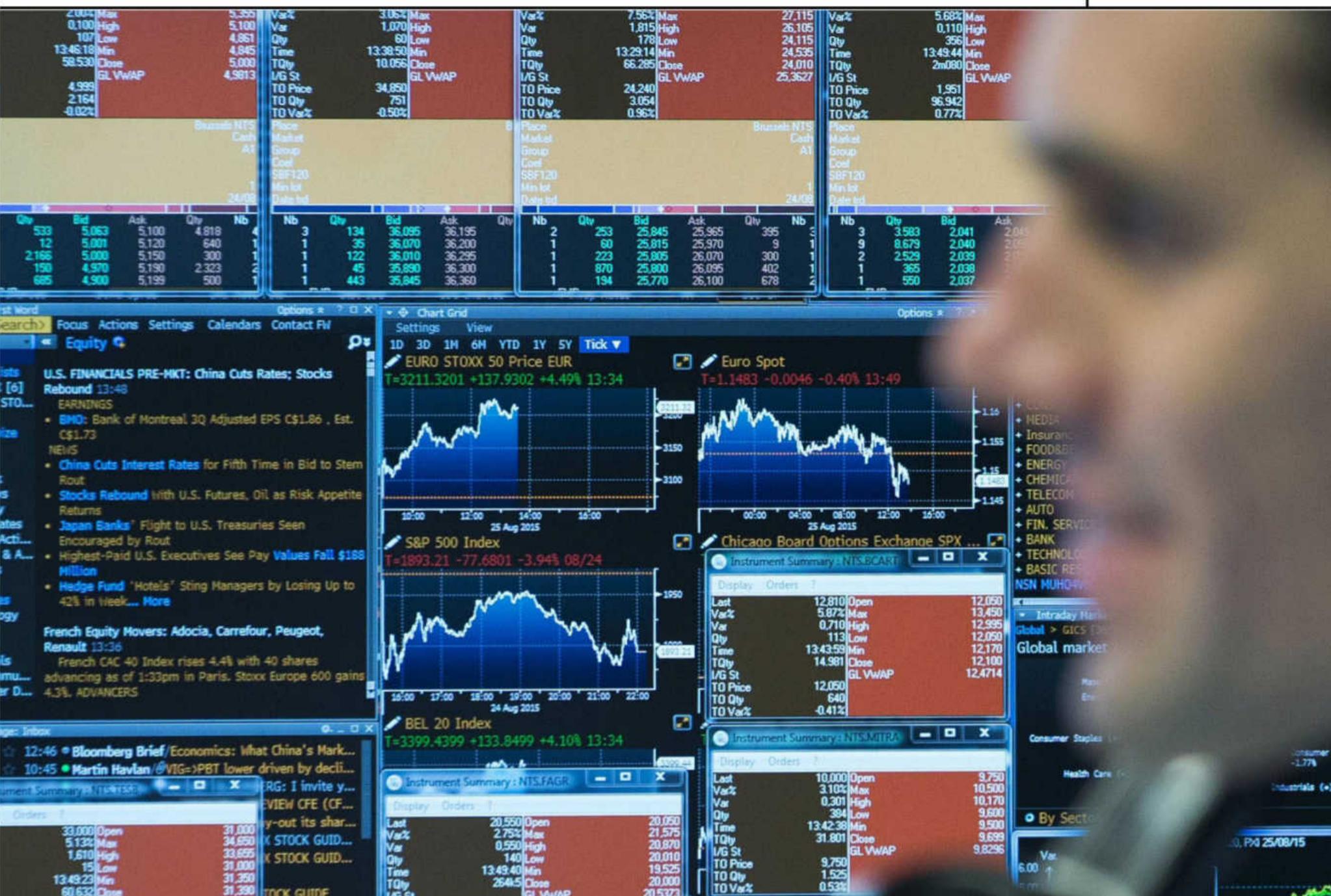
A roll of stickers showing support for Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl sits on a table inside of an Idaho coffee shop where Bergdahl worked as a teenager, on June 2, 2014. Bergdahl was freed but on terms much more favorable to the Taliban than those negotiated by Amerine's team, and there has been little visible progress regarding the other Western hostages still being held.

Credit: Scott Olson/Getty

In early November 2001, as he and his men prepared for the unknown in southern Afghanistan, Amerine wrote in his journal: “It’s a fucked-up war when you are more worried about fighting your chain of command than the actual enemy.” Nearly 14 years later, the battle continues.

“Am I right? Is the system broken?” Amerine asked rhetorically in his Senate testimony. He told the committee that as news of his current troubles spread, he received an outpouring of support from service members and the former cadets he taught at West Point. “I fear for their safety when they go to war,” he said. “And now they fear for my safety in Washington.”

Correction: A photo caption in this article originally misspelled the first name of Jani Bergdahl.



Yves Herman/Reuters

WHAT WALL STREET GETS WRONG ABOUT CHINA

YES, GROWTH IS SLOWING, BUT BEIJING IS ON A MORE SUSTAINABLE PATH.

The number of so-called experts yammering on television about China who know next to nothing about China has reached an all-time high. And for these pseudo-Sinologists, the verdict is in: China, the world's great growth story, is imploding. Its stock market plummeted—down five

straight trading days between August 19 and 24—and its real economy is slowing. Because China is the second-largest economy and one of the U.S.’s biggest trading partners, some analysts say Beijing is going to drag it down with them.

Except it’s not that simple. And for those of us who work in China as correspondents—particularly for those like me, who’ve been here a long time—that reaction has been nothing short of depressing. Apparently, no one reads anything we write.

The immediate cause of the market’s volatility was an unexpected “devaluation” of China’s currency—the renminbi—on August 10 and 11. For more than a decade, the renminbi had either been stable against the U.S. dollar or appreciated steadily. But when Beijing allowed it to sink by 3 percent over the course of two trading days, it seemed shocking—mainly because of what’s going on elsewhere in the world. Two major currencies (the euro and the Japanese yen) and a whole host of minor ones (the Russian ruble, the Brazilian real, etc.) have been sharply devalued over the past couple of years. These devaluations have intensified deflationary pressures in the global economy, because goods and services, in dollar terms, have become less expensive. If China decides to join the beggar-thy-neighbor parade, and further weakens its currency to help its flagging export sector, I would be concerned.

That’s how the markets took the news. But it’s likely the wrong interpretation. Beijing eventually wants the renminbi to be more like the dollar: a currency that international trade is priced in and that foreign central banks hold as reserves. China also wants the renminbi to be part of the International Monetary Fund’s special drawing rights scheme—a supplementary stash of foreign exchange to be used only in extreme circumstances. The IMF declined to admit the renminbi earlier this summer, saying the currency needs to be subject to market forces. At about 6.2 renminbi

to the dollar, most economists believed the Chinese currency was slightly overvalued. The 3 percent devaluation signaled that the People's Bank of China (Beijing's Fed) was going to allow the renminbi to float a bit more. Anything else was a secondary concern.

So despite all the brouhaha, China is not undergoing a Japanese- or European-style devaluation. The government is simply managing an economic transition. Since the government of President Xi Jinping and Prime Minister Li Keqiang came to power in 2012, Beijing has made it clear that the engines of the Chinese economy—investment and exports—need to give way to growth driven by consumption. The Communist Party's platform also stated that “market forces” will be “decisive” going forward. That was a signal that the era of hefty loans to state-owned companies to build infrastructure was coming to a close. It also means, as the government acknowledged, annual growth rates were going to come down. The target this year is 7 percent—down significantly from the 10 percent era that lasted more than a decade—and one that Beijing may not even hit.

The transition to a more consumer-led economy will take time, but it is occurring. Consumption accounted for 60 percent of China's gross domestic product (GDP) in the first half of this year. In 2015, the service sector and consumption will be bigger than the manufacturing and construction for the third straight year. Personal income continues to grow at nearly 10 percent annually.

Is this transition bad news? For companies that bet on China growing at a double-digit pace forever, sure. But it's also normal. Economic history shows that when a sizable economy like China's moves from one growth model to another, the shift is rarely painless. This happened to Brazil in the 1960s and Korea and Japan in the 1990s. As Beijing-based economist Michael Pettis writes in his book *The Great*

Rebalancing, “The impact...will probably manifest itself in the form of a ‘lost’ decade or longer for China.”

Is that why Chinese equities have crashed? Not so much. China’s stock market is a speculative hothouse, and it is not very indicative of where the economy is going. Only 7 percent of the urban population own stocks, and 69 percent of Chinese have less than the equivalent of \$15,000 in their accounts, according to Andy Rothman, senior investment strategist at Matthews Asia. So just because its stock market has been cratering, doesn’t mean that the Chinese economy—or the American one, for that matter—will go into recession.

To some extent, it makes sense that the American stock market buckled on the news of slower Chinese growth. Corporate leaders, like many equity analysts, tend to fall in love with straight-line analysis, and during the first decade of this century, when it came to China’s economy, that straight line was only going up. China was supposed to quickly become the world’s largest market for everything, so the U.S. Fortune 500, and everyone else, invested heavily on that assumption. A friend of mine serves on the board of two large U.S. manufacturers, and he says their sales growth in China is 4 to 6 percent this year. The problem is, they had planned for 8 to 10 percent growth. Partly as a result, both companies are now losing money in China—the first time in more than a decade.

But the American market clearly overreacted. On August 24, Apple chief executive Tim Cook took the unusual step of emailing CNBC’s Jim Cramer to say that iPhone sales are growing faster than he had expected in China. Why would that be the case? Because urban consumers have money, and they are still spending. And that’s not going to change anytime soon. Investors seemed to finally recognize this when the market rallied on August 26 and 27.

Despite all the doomsday rhetoric on television, China’s economic transition will be good for the global economy in

the long term. Though Beijing had a reputation for driving growth, its currency manipulation led to big trade surpluses that actually stripped growth from its trading partners.

Now that will change. After the close of trading on August 25, the People's Bank of China announced further cuts in interest rates and in its reserves—policy steps it hopes will increase cash in the economy, and thus consumption. As Patrick Chovanec, managing director and chief strategist at Silvercrest Asset Management in New York, puts it:

"By propping up consumption in the face of an otherwise wrenching economic adjustment, China can become a source of much-needed demand, and a true growth-driver for the world economy."

China, of course, does have a debt problem; the country's overall debt has surged from an estimated 85 percent of GDP in 2008 to about 280 percent now. That's debt held largely in the hands of state-owned enterprises, the financing arms of local governments and real estate developers. This means that there is virtually no chance the government can use a massive credit jolt to jumpstart the economy. The question is whether they can avoid an unexpected debt crisis—a big bank run or large defaults in the shadow banking sector. Neither is beyond the realm of possibility. But if China's growth slows over time, and debt issuance grows ever more slowly, the country's troublesome debt-to-GDP ratio can begin to shrink.

In other words, the boom is over, but Beijing isn't burning. Slower growth may be exactly what China and the world needs.



Doug Mills/The New York Times/Redux

HOW THE IRAN NUCLEAR DEAL WEAKENED AIPAC, WASHINGTON'S MOST POWERFUL INTEREST GROUP

**THE AMERICAN ISRAEL PUBLIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
PLACED ALL OF ITS CHIPS ON ITS MULTI-MILLION
DOLLAR CAMPAIGN TO SCUTTLE THE IRAN DEAL, AND
IT NOW APPEARS IT WILL LOSE THAT BET.**

Updated | Until recently in Washington, the only issue Democrats and Republicans seemed to agree on was Israel. Though lawmakers on opposite sides of the aisle have bickered incessantly over Obamacare and federal spending, they always passed pro-Israel security bills with overwhelming majorities—from slapping new sanctions on Iran to reaffirming the Jewish state’s right to defend itself.

But as Congress prepares to challenge President Barack Obama’s nuclear deal with Iran this month, the cause that once brought together Israel’s bipartisan supporters has at least momentarily divided them. And that divide has exposed a larger rift between Jewish Democrats and Israel’s main U.S. lobby, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC).

The Iran deal constrains the country’s nuclear program for 15 years in return for ending international sanctions. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, all Senate Republicans, most House Republicans and the entire field of GOP presidential candidates oppose the deal, saying it clears the path for Iran to become a nuclear power. A growing number of Democrats, however, disagree. In fact, there now appears to be enough Democratic support in the House and Senate to prevent Republicans from blocking the deal.

With ratification of the agreement now seemingly inevitable, some analysts say it could hurt AIPAC’s standing on Capitol Hill. For years, the lobby was among the most formidable in Washington, respected and, because of its hardball tactics, feared. So this summer, when AIPAC met with hundreds of lawmakers and spent millions of dollars on TV ads in an attempt to block the agreement, some thought the group might thwart the president.

Yet in challenging Obama on Iran, AIPAC may have overestimated its influence. While a vote on military aid for Israel is an easy one for lawmakers, a vote on the Iran deal is far more complicated: It involves matters of war and

peace, which lawmakers have historically granted presidents wide latitude to pursue. “The strength of any 800-pound gorilla lies in the perception that his power is so significant that no one challenges him,” says Robert Wexler, a former Democratic congressman from Florida and a supporter of the deal. “But if the 800-pound gorilla challenges and loses, then the deterrence factor is seriously weakened.” (AIPAC did not respond to a Newsweek request for comment.)

Part of the lobby’s clout has been its long-standing claim that it speaks for American Jews on Israel-related issues. But during the recent scramble for support on Iran, J Street, a rival pro-Israel lobby that supports the nuclear deal, has become an influential player and liberal alternative, despite a budget that’s a fraction of AIPAC’s. “The illusion that there’s some form of wall-to-wall unity and unanimity on these issues in the Jewish political community has probably been put to rest by this fight,” says J Street President Jeremy Ben-Ami.

The battle with Obama wouldn’t be the first time AIPAC has been defeated by an American president. In 1978, the lobby failed to get Congress to stop Jimmy Carter’s sale of advanced warplanes to Egypt and Saudi Arabia. In 1981, AIPAC lost its bid to block Ronald Reagan’s sale of surveillance aircraft to the Saudis. And in 1991, the group fell short in its effort to win loan guarantees for Israel because of George H.W. Bush’s concerns that the money would be used in West Bank settlements.

But in each of those squabbles, AIPAC came close to winning, which burnished its image. And in subsequent elections, the lobby mobilized pro-Israel donors to help oust political opponents, most notably Republican Charles Percy of Illinois, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, in 1984. “All the Jews in America, from coast to coast, gathered to oust Percy,” boasted Tom Dine, AIPAC’s executive director at the time. “And the American politicians

—those who hold public positions now, and those who aspire—got the message.”

Today, no one is suggesting that AIPAC will have any trouble winning congressional support for U.S. military aid to Israel. Analysts agree that the security relationship between Washington and Jerusalem is strong and will remain so. Stephen Walt, a Harvard professor who co-authored a book critical of the Israel lobby, suggests that AIPAC’s lobbying against the Iran deal may wind up improving Jerusalem’s leverage when it’s time to negotiate an enhanced security package that Obama offered the Jewish state as a way to make the accord more palatable. Though Netanyahu is holding off on those discussions until after Congress votes on the nuclear accord, Israel’s security establishment has quietly signaled to Washington that it would like to increase the \$3 billion in U.S. military aid Israel has received annually since 1979 and extend the arrangement for several decades.

But the lobby may have more trouble convincing the Obama administration to provide the kind of political support Jerusalem has grown used to. After Netanyahu took a position against Palestinian statehood during his March re-election campaign, Obama told him that Washington would “reassess” its options on U.S.-Israel relations and Middle East diplomacy. Since then, there has been speculation that the United States won’t block some pro-Palestinian resolutions at the United Nations Security Council.

The administration can probably count on J Street to provide political cover. The left-wing, pro-peace lobby draws its support from younger, more secular Jews who have grown disillusioned with AIPAC’s support for Netanyahu’s harsh policies toward the Palestinians. And since Obama took office in 2009, some say, AIPAC’s stance on Israel has been indistinguishable from that of Netanyahu and the Republican Party. “In the 1980s and 1990s, it was very easy to be bipartisan,” says Ben-Ami. “There were no arguments.

But today, there's a real argument, and you have to choose which side you're on. That's uncomfortable for individuals and organizations. It raises issues of dual loyalty."

Until recently, AIPAC has managed to keep lawmakers in line by using vote studies on Israel-related bills to influence which candidates receive hefty campaign contributions. But the tally of 29 Democrats in the Senate and 74 in the House who support the Iran accord suggests a growing number of lawmakers are ready to defy the lobby, thanks in large part to effective fundraising by J Street. AIPAC still has the power to influence which candidates receive pro-Israel PAC money, "but I don't think the perception of that influence will be nearly as great," says Wexler, who heads the S. Daniel Abraham Center for Middle East Peace. Says Douglas Bloomfield, a former legislative director for AIPAC and now a critic of the lobby, "There will be a greater inclination to resist."

With the 2016 congressional campaigns getting underway, some analysts say it's critical for AIPAC to punish supporters of the Iran deal. Political observers will be watching the Wisconsin Senate race between Tea Party Republican Ron Johnson, an outspoken opponent of the agreement, and former Senator Russ Feingold, a Jewish Democrat who supports the accord. Another telling contest will be the Illinois Senate race between Republican Mark Kirk and Democrat Tammy Duckworth, an Army helicopter pilot who lost both her legs during the Iraq War and is undecided on the deal. Even Jerrold Nadler, an 11-term Democrat from New York, who is Jewish, could face a primary challenge since he has publicly backed the nuclear agreement.

And those who think the Iran issue will fade away once the deal gets through Congress had better think again. An Obama victory there is likely to galvanize Republicans —particularly as the 2016 election looms. Both Kirk and Republican Lindsey Graham of South Carolina, a long-

shot presidential contender, are crafting a new set of non-nuclear sanctions that would deprive Iran of nearly all the economic benefits it's getting from the deal. Some of Obama's supporters predict Republicans will make the Iran deal the Obamacare of foreign policy and never stop trying to kill it.

"The fight is not over just because the Iran deal gets past Congress," says Dylan Williams, J Street's vice president of government affairs. "It's something we're all going to have to keep our eye on for years."

That's something on which all sides seem to agree.

Correction: This article originally incorrectly described Republican Senate candidate Mark Kirk as a former AIPAC employee. He has never worked for the organization.



Miguel Riopa/AFP/Getty

A PHANTOM MENACE: WHY TURKISH CONSERVATIVES ARE WORRYING ABOUT JEDIS

SOME CONSERVATIVES FEAR A RELIGION BASED ON STAR WARS IS UNDERMINING ISLAM AMONG YOUNG TURKS.

Across the galaxy, Star Wars fans are eagerly awaiting the December release of *The Force Awakens*, the seventh installment in the sci-fi saga. But in Turkey, the force is having a different sort of effect—at least for some conservative Muslims.

In August, the official magazine of the Diyanet, Turkey's state-run religious authority, published an article about the power of the silver screen, arguing that the Turkish film industry portrays Islam in a negative light. The article caused a stir in the Turkish media because it focused on the rise of Jediism—a "religion" or way of life based on the mystical space knights depicted in Star Wars. "Cinema can even create a fictional religion," says Bilal Yorulmaz, an assistant professor of theology at Marmara University in Istanbul and the article's author.

Since at least 2001, hundreds of thousands of people—mainly in the United Kingdom and Australia—have listed their official religion as "Jedi" on national censuses. In some countries, including the U.K. and United States, there are even "churches" of Jediism, which draws on Taoist, Buddhist and Catholic elements. The phenomenon was initially dismissed as the tongue-in-cheek protests of atheists, but believers insist it is a legitimate philosophy.

Turkey is more than 99 percent Muslim, and Yorulmaz doesn't see Jediism as a threat to Islamic values. But analysts say the article is indicative of broader fears among the religious elite. "Of course Jediism is trivia, but I think it reflects conservative Turkish Islamic concerns about New Age religions replacing Islam among the youth," says Mustafa Akyol, the author of *Islam Without Extremes*, a book about the roots of liberal Islam.

This isn't the first time Jediism has been controversial in Turkey. In April, a student at Dokuz Eyll University in Izmir started an online petition calling for the construction of Jedi temples. The petition, which has received more than 8,400 signatures, was a satirical response to the government's

plan to build 80 mosques at Turkish universities by the end of 2015. "Some people think we are stupid," says Akın Çatalay Çalıkkalan, the computer science student who created the Jedi petition. "[But] Jediism is a good way for a protest movement [to fight] against the policies of the Turkish government."

The separation of mosque and state is a contentious issue in Turkey. The constitution defines the country as secular, and for years Turkey's military dictatorships clamped down on religion. But since the ruling AK Party was elected in 2002, it has taken a number of steps to give Islam a more prominent role in daily life. Two years ago, the government lifted its ban on state employees wearing headscarves to work. Last year, it did the same for primary school girls. In 2013, Turkey also banned late-night sales of alcohol, saying it would protect young people from the harmful effects of drink.

Akyol, the Turkish author, says Turks have far more religious freedom now than they did under military rule. Yet he believes the way the government talks about "segments of society other than conservative Sunni Muslims can be disrespectful and intimidating."

Whether Jediism is a real religion or not, it seems that Turkey's religious authorities want to make sure that the force is still with Islam.



STUDY: MASS SHOOTINGS ‘EXCEPTIONALLY AMERICAN PROBLEM’

U.S. HAS LESS THAN FIVE PERCENT OF WORLD’S POPULATION, BUT HAD 31 PERCENT OF MASS SHOOTINGS IN 1966-2012.

The incidents seem to accumulate at a staggering pace: Mass shootings in schools, movie theaters and other public places have left scores of victims in their wake. And an

overwhelming number of them have occurred in the United States.

Adam Lankford, a criminal justice professor at the University of Alabama, looks at the “dark side of American exceptionalism” in a new study to be presented Sunday at the Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association in Chicago. In “Mass Shooters, Firearms, and Social Strains: A Global Analysis of an Exceptionally American Problem,” Lankford uses a quantitative analysis of mass shootings around the world between 1966 and 2012 to attempt to understand their prevalence in the U.S., and he consults previous research to try to understand the factors behind this unmatched frequency.

“It’s a bigger problem today than it was a decade ago and it may be a bigger problem in the future,” Lankford tells Newsweek. “There are a lot of questions that people have posed in the past that we didn’t have statistics on or quantitative answers for,” such as just how prevalent mass shootings are in American society compared with other countries, and whether there’s a statistically significant relationship between this and other numbers, like rates of firearm ownership, homicide and suicide.

Building on two “active shooter” reports released by the NYPD in [2010](#) and [2012](#), Lankford began by compiling data on mass shootings around the world between 1966 and 2012. He used the [FBI’s definition of mass murder](#)—which indicates four or more people killed—as a threshold, with the assumption that more deadly events would have been more widely documented and therefore it would be easier to assemble a more complete list.

With data for 171 countries, Lankford found that the United States had by far the most public mass shooters, with 90 during the 46-year period. That’s five times as many as the next country on the list—the Philippines, with 18. Rounding out the top five were Russia (15), Yemen (11) and France (10). In other words, although the [U.S. accounts for](#)

less than five percent of the world's population, it had 31 percent of mass shootings between 1966 and 2012.

The strongest statistically significant factor Lankford found was the national firearm ownership rate. "What was surprising was how strong the relationship was—no matter what test I ran the data always showed the same thing," he says. Even when Lankford removed the American outlier, his statistical tests showed just as strong a relationship between firearm ownership rates and mass shootings.

The top five countries in terms of civilian firearm ownership rates—the U.S., Yemen, Switzerland, Finland and Serbia—each made the top 15 in the list of mass shootings. This finding "suggests that essentially you can't be in the top five in firearm ownership and not have this problem," Lankford says, even in countries like Switzerland and Finland, which are "relatively peaceful in terms of total number of homicides." Homicide and suicide rates did not appear to be significant in Lankford's study.



Fifteen crosses were erected near Columbine High School in memory of the people killed during the April 20, 1999 shooting rampage at the school. A 2015 paper by Adam Lankford sees mass shootings as an "exceptionally American problem." Credit: JM/HB/AA

Lankford also found that offenders in the U.S. were more likely to use multiple weapons and to carry out their rampages in schools or workplaces than were shooters in other countries.

To try to further speculate on the prevalence of mass shootings in the U.S. and to look beyond firearm ownership rates, Lankford turned to his own and others' previous research to ask: Is there something about American culture that incubates more mass shooters?

“At least one explanation” about violence in the U.S. has suggested that “crime and deviance occur when there’s an unhealthy gap between people’s dreams and aspirations and their ability to reach those dreams,” Lankford explains. In the U.S. in particular, he writes, success and fame are idolized. “Everybody is shaped by culture in a way,” says

Lankford. “Our culture has people reaching for the stars and slipping and falling probably more often.”

Public mass shooters—who often make comments or leave behind notes that help explain their motives—frequently cite “blocked goal achievement (such as being expelled from school or fired from work)” or “negative social interactions (such as being bullied by fellow students, coworkers, or supervisors),” according to the paper. Mental illness can distort certain individuals’ perceptions of such strains and exacerbate their inability to deal with them in a non-violent manner.

That school and work represent these grievances as well as the gap between one’s aspirations and ability to fulfill those dreams could explain why American mass shooters are more likely than those in other countries to target schools and workplaces.

“Unfortunately, due to some combination of strains, mental illness, and American idolization of fame, some mass shooters succumb to terrible delusions of grandeur, and seek fame and glory through killing,” Lankford writes in his paper. “They accurately recognize that the only way they can guarantee that their names and faces adorn magazines, newspapers, and television is by slaughtering unarmed men, women, or children.”

Such was the case with the Columbine High School shooting in 1999, which has inspired copycat shootings in the U.S. and other countries. Lankford cites a 2009 paper by Ralph Larkin that identified school shooters in Argentina, Canada, Finland and Germany who “imitated or referenced the Columbine killers.”

Mass shooters may be far more common in the U.S. than in any other country in recent decades, but “in a world that has been made functionally smaller by advances in technology and communications,” Lankford writes,

“America’s exceptional problem of mass shooters could grow increasingly globalized.”



Brian Gartside

PAGES OF A 'DRINKABLE BOOK' COULD BRING SAFE WATER TO MILLIONS

A RESEARCHER HAS INVENTED A CHEAP FILTER PAPER THAT REMOVES MORE THAN 99.9 PERCENT OF BACTERIA FROM WATER.

Since 1990, 2.6 billion people have gained access to uncontaminated sources of water, according to the World Health Organization and UNICEF's Joint Monitoring

Programme for Water Supply and Sanitation. But roughly 663 million people around the world still do not have clean drinking water, and they turn instead to sources like surface water and unprotected wells and springs, much of that rife with contaminants that can cause disease and death.

Theresa Dankovich, an environmental chemist and postdoctoral researcher at Carnegie Mellon University, is working on a cheap and easy solution. As a doctoral candidate in chemistry at McGill University, she created a silver nanoparticle filter paper that can make bacteria-infested water as clean as what comes out of faucets in the U.S. In lab tests, she found that the paper killed more than 99.9 percent of bacteria.

To make the bacteria-killing sheets, Dankovich begins with a thick, porous and inexpensive kind of filter paper that stays strong even when wet, and soaks it in a solution containing a silver nanoparticle precursor. She then heats the paper in an oven to bind the silver nanoparticles to the fibers on its surface, rinses it off and dries it. The paper is ready then to have water poured through it. Since silver is extremely toxic to bacteria, the bacteria in contaminated water are killed when they come in contact with the nanoparticles, leaving virtually no viable bacteria in the water that's passed through the paper.

Once the paper proved itself in the lab, Dankovich set out to test its merits in communities with diverse water sources, from Haiti to South Africa to Ghana to Kenya. In 2014, Dankovich formally founded the nonprofit pAge Drinking Paper with husband and business partner Jonathan Levine, an earth and environmental engineer. They also worked with the nonprofit WATERisLIFE and the ad agency DDB to make a [video](#) featuring a product that collated a year's worth of paper filter pages into what they call the "drinkable book"; the pages were printed with instructions on safe water habits.

Luke Hydrick, a design student at the University of Cincinnati, was so taken with Dankovich's work that he asked if he could design filter holders for the paper as his senior thesis project. Armed with several prototypes, he joined Dankovich in June 2015 on a trip to Bangladesh, where they conducted focus groups and surveys alongside the nongovernmental organization iDE-Bangladesh on how best to incorporate the filter papers into everyday life.

One thin plastic holder designed to fit into a kolshi, an aluminum cistern that's ubiquitous as a water holder in Bangladesh, "really resonated with people," says Hydrick, since "the container is already embedded in social fabric of Bangladeshi life." The pAge team and iDE-Bangladesh hope to be able to bring that filter design to market in the near future.

In the meantime, pAge Drinking Paper also launched an [Indiegogo crowdfunding campaign](#) to raise money to test the papers and culturally appropriate filter designs in up to a dozen additional villages. Dankovich wants to check health metrics, water quality and consumer preferences in an extensive range of settings before distributing her invention widely. The organization is also gearing up to manufacture the papers on a larger scale, which will help it reach its goal of having each filter—which can clean about 26 gallons of water—cost 10 cents or less.

"We hope that it does reach millions to hundreds of millions of people," Dankovich says, "and improve their water and improve their health."



Richard Drew/AP

IN SILICON VALLEY, FAILING IS SUCCEEDING

**SILICON VALLEY DOMINATES THE TECH WORLD
BECAUSE IT KNOWS THE VALUE OF A GOOD F-UP.**

Twenty years ago, **Netscape** ignited the dot-com boom with its initial public offering. And ever since, everybody in tech has been trying to figure out how to consistently spot the embryonic startups that are going to become the next supernovas.

The industry still sucks at it...which, perversely, is Silicon Valley's global competitive advantage.

This is a big point that's missing from most of the conversations about so-called **unicorns**—tech startups valued at more than \$1 billion. The only way for the industry to breed a handful of unicorns is to fail a whole helluva lot. The type of failure we're talking about is like how frogs lay 20,000 eggs so a few wind up as adults sitting on a lily pad sucking down mosquito dinners.

The data from startup trackers like CB Insights show that less than 1 percent of venture-backed companies end up as enduring billion-dollar businesses—a stat that hasn't gotten any better since Netscape's time. Tech investor **Mike Maples** talks about seeking to put his money into "thunder lizards," his term for unicorns. "Thunder lizards are rare," he tells the class he teaches at Stanford University. "If in a given year there are 10,000 startups that get funded by angels and 1,500 get a Series A funding, then 80 companies will likely do well—but only 12 will be thunder lizards."

Maples or any other investor will tell you there is no way to know which early startups will become thunder lizards. **Steve Vassallo** of Foundation Capital quipped at a recent dinner I attended that he invests in "zero-billion-dollar companies," meaning startups that are so unusual, they're either going to explode onto the scene or crater. And he has no idea which will do which.

Failure goes to the heart of why Google **reorganized** into Alphabet. Not even CEO Larry Page knows for certain how to spot the next tech breakout success. Shareholders in a successful behemoth don't take kindly to lots of failure, so Google (or Alphabet or whatever) is shielding its core business while using orbital entities to gamble on a lot of stuff that will surely crap out in the hope that one or two will rocket the company into the next generation.

Yet here's the good news for Silicon Valley: If enormous failure is the only sure path to creating tech superstars, no

place in the world is better set up for failure than Silicon Valley. The region should proudly hang a banner across University Avenue in Palo Alto that reads, “Failure is always an option!”

The U.S. tech industry’s success in this regard begins with the American mindset toward failure, which is certainly real and very different from that of just about any other nation, where failure can bring shame, ostracism or jail time. In the U.S., the only real failure is giving up. Otherwise, we love a good comeback. Donald Trump’s companies filed for bankruptcy four times. Rick Springfield has done nothing since the ’80s, and now his co-star is Meryl Streep. The Uber guys founded crappy companies before Uber. And Steve Jobs is the most celebrated one-time fuckup of them all.

In tech, though, failure is more than attitude. Since Netscape’s days, the failure business has been machined to perfection. It’s easier to try and fail now more than ever.

Two decades ago, a startup pretty much had to turn to a few powerful venture capitalists for funding. Now there’s a panoply of angel and early-stage investors, not to mention funding sites like Kickstarter. Amazon Web Services makes it simple and cheap for a cloud-based startup to rent computing power and distribution, eliminating major obstacles that in Netscape’s day would’ve made failure expensive. Open-source libraries of code have vastly reduced the cost and time involved in assembling software for an app or online service.

Add up all those things, and initial startup costs have **dropped** by a remarkable factor. Conventional wisdom right now says that if in 1995 it would’ve cost \$1 million to get a company off the ground, a similar company today might need just \$10,000 to launch.

Put together culture and cost, and these days anybody in Silicon Valley can risk failure. So just about everybody does. Tech people in Silicon Valley start companies the way

every Nashville resident who can hum writes songs. And that's a good thing. It means more tadpoles spawned, and more tadpoles leads to more unicorns—screw the mixed metaphor.

This failure rate is what other societies have trouble copying. You see stories all the time about countries trying to create a Silicon Valley—the U.K. with its [Silicon Roundabout](#) or the [Start-Up Chile](#) program. But they won't make a dent until they can churn out thousands and thousands of failures.

If you want a hint at a reason China is stalling or why Japan hasn't given the world anything interesting since the Sony Walkman or why we're not filling our iPhones with apps invented in India, it's because none of those countries can fail like we can. Other countries have loads of brilliant people capable of creating tech superstar companies, but the odds in this frog's-egg game are so bad and the rules so mysterious, the only true path to success is more failure than most cultures can stomach.

Someday, someone might figure out a better approach, and entrepreneurs and investors will be able to custom-craft unicorns. Rare individuals seem to know how to get it right more often than not. [Rich Barton](#) started Expedia, Zillow and Glassdoor without failing a thousand times. So maybe it's possible.

But don't bet on a magic potion anytime soon. Meanwhile, as they might say in tech circles, failure is a feature, not a bug.



Robert Schlie/Alamy

GRASS THAT DOESN'T NEED WATER COULD KEEP CALIFORNIA GREEN

A CITIZEN SCIENTIST CAME UP WITH THE SEEDS FOR A POTENTIALLY DROUGHT-PROOF LAWN.

Brandon Wilcox had a problem. He was building a dream house for his family in San Diego and wanted the kids to have some grass to play on. But in the midst of the California water crisis, that would be heresy—his neighbors

were ripping out their lawns and replacing them with drought-tolerant plants. The environmentally conscientious Wilcox felt ashamed just thinking about it. “I didn’t want the stigma,” he says, “but I wanted the grass.”

After some research, he came across [Pearl’s Premium](#), a grass seed cultivated a few years ago by Massachusetts citizen scientist Jackson Madnick. Once it gets established, it needs very little water, Madnick told Wilcox on the phone. What’s more, Wilcox would have to mow it only once a month, at most. Some months, he wouldn’t need to cut it at all. So Wilcox bought the seeds and began waiting to see if the grass would live up to its promise.

The putting-green yard is an environmentally unsound and relatively recent American fixation, says Ted Steinberg, a professor of history and law at Case Western Reserve University. In his book *American Green: The Obsessive Quest for the Perfect Lawn*, Steinberg credits the dawn of the lawn to Scotts, the company that has been selling grass seeds since the 19th century. In the 1920s, it began publishing the popular “Lawn Care” newsletter, ramping up the green appeal.

The message to customers was that “you weren’t just growing grass, but you’re refashioning the outside of your home to mimic the trappings of the aristocratic life,” Steinberg says. In the early 20th century, only the rich could afford stretches of lavish green in their yards. But after World War II, potent chemical fertilizers and affordable lawn mowers brought grasses to the masses. Soon the country was seeding, weeding, growing, mowing and watering coast to coast, even though the turf seeds used to sod America weren’t meant to flourish in many of its soils.

The most common lawn grasses—like Kentucky blue and bentgrass—were brought here from parts of Europe with plenty of rainfall. Kentucky blue grows very fast and needs a lot of water and mowing—and then it turns brown in winter. Bentgrass has to be cut very low to give golf courses their

carpet-like allure. That traumatizes the grass, which requires large amounts of water and fertilizer to rebound.

That watering, however, initiates a cycle of environmental devastation. It leaches nutrients from the soil, which then must be replenished by spreading more fertilizer. Then, as these phosphorus-rich chemicals wash out from the soil, they trickle down into ponds and rivers, causing algae blooms. Toxic pesticides, used to rid lawns of dandelions and clover, wind up in farm fields and the water supply. What's more, people unwittingly carry them into their houses on their shoes, socks and bare feet. "I wouldn't be surprised if they were found in people's refrigerators," Steinberg says. And they're particularly dangerous for pets and children who like to roll on the grass.

By the time lawn chemicals were linked to maladies ranging from asthma to neurological impairments to cancer, lawns were the largest irrigated crop in America, according to 2005 research by Cristina Milesi, a NASA scientist at the time. Based on satellite data and aerial photos, Milesi estimated that, from backyards to golf courses, Americans cultivated **almost 50,000 square miles** of grass—or three times the amount of irrigated corn. Mowing clippings added up to 37 billion pounds annually, she says—the weight of about **147,000 blue whales**. And this is a thirsty crop: A typical suburban lawn sucks down **10,000 gallons of water a year**—not even counting the rainfall—according to the Environmental Protection Agency.



Worried about dwindling water supplies, communities across the drought-stricken Southwest have begun waging war on that symbol of suburban living: the lush, green grass of front lawns. Credit: Monica Almeida/The New York Times/Redux

And yet there are many benefits to surrounding one's home with patches of lush green. Lawns generate oxygen—a 50-square-foot area makes enough **for a family of four**, according to the **Lawn Institute**, a nonprofit that funds grass research on behalf of turfgrass producers. They also trap dirt and dust particles and are carbon dioxide sinks, **sequestering carbon from the atmosphere**. On hot days, turfgrass lowers surface temperatures, which is the underlying concept behind the trend of planting it on roofs. And of course people like lying, playing and picnicking on the green—and there's nothing wrong with that. It's just that we've been trying to create a perfect lawn with imperfect grass.

That's why Madnick, a multimedia show designer by profession (he plans out those big concerts or theme park shows with lasers, music, fireworks, etc.) and an environmentalist by heart, set off to perfect the grass—a breed that would provide all the environmental and health benefits with none of the detriments. He gathered thousands

of seeds from around the world and began growing them in paper coffee cups on his patio, with little water and without fertilizer and pesticides. “Within a year, all [the] grasses perished,” he recalls, except for three prickly cactus-like types that no one would want on a lawn. He became convinced that the hardy grass he wanted didn’t exist. But that didn’t mean it couldn’t be created.

Madnick turned to turf scientists. Across the country, university researchers were experimenting with seed mixes; Madnick began to make his own homemade mixes, carefully logging seed types and amounts. But they kept dying too. Finally, five and a half years later, after over 7,000 different tries, a breakthrough: One tiny batch grew very slowly, sprouting thin-blade, emerald-green silky shoots—and didn’t die. “I almost couldn’t believe it,” says Madnick, but he grew more batches of the same mix, with the same result.

The winning combo was a seven-seed mix of perennial rye, Kentucky blue, tall fescue, chewing fescue, sheep fescue and two other fine fescue types. The grasses somehow formed a symbiotic relationship, which enables them to grow very slowly, requiring little fertilizer and mowing, Madnick says. But the real secret was in the grassroots. The typical lawn’s roots grow 2 to 3 inches, but Madnick’s mix goes 12 to 14 inches downward, tapping deep into the soil water. The exact seed proportions are crucial; otherwise, the roots become shallow again.

He named the grass after his mother, Pearl, and then created two slightly different mixes, one each optimized for shady and sunny conditions. He sold his first bag of seeds in 2009 and then began selling in Whole Food Markets and some Home Depot stores. In 2010, he won the MassChallenge prize in innovation, and in 2013 he was honored by Boston’s Museum of Science for his invention. Now Pearl’s is growing on more than 300,000 American lawns and will be soon exported to Europe and the Middle East.

Meanwhile, Madnick is still experimenting. “I am testing the upper limits of abuse,” he says, chuckling. “How little water or how much salt can the grass tolerate, how much I can terrorize the grass and still keep it alive.” So far, Pearl’s Premium won’t work for soccer or baseball fields because it’s too soft and cleats would ruin it, Madnick says, but that’s the next frontier.

By now, some of Madnick’s customers have had Pearl’s Premium for several seasons. Stuart Lund, who lives in the Utah desert at high elevation where rain is a rarity, says that for the past three years he had the greenest lawn in town—to the point that people think it’s plastic. A truck driver who is home once every two months, Lund has a sprinkler system that waters his lawn only twice a week, while others do it as often as twice a day.

Massachusetts landscaper Mike Powers has seeded Pearl’s Premium on about 100 lawns, including his own, over the past few years. His customers save big on water; over the past year, most traditional lawns had to be watered four times a week to maintain that green, healthy look, Powers says, but after four months without watering it still looks great. Another Massachusetts resident, Karen Weber, says Pearl’s Premium was the only grass that ever took on a stubborn hill outside her mother’s nursing home. And after the frigid winter of 2014-15, the lawn emerged from under the snow emerald-green.

On Wilcox’s lawn, Pearl’s Premium has been growing only for three months, but it already has become a local sensation of sorts. “All of my neighbors are talking about it,” he says. Wilcox wants to work with the state authorities to get Pearl’s Premium on the list of recommended environmentally friendly plants. That would, for all intents and purposes, be the green light needed for other families who want to enjoy their grass without being concerned. “We water it hardly at all now. I rarely mow it, and it looks and

feels better than normal grass,” Wilcox says. “I call it grass without the guilt.”



Luca Zanetti/laif/Redux

COLOMBIA TO END COCA FARM GLYPHOSATE SPRAYINGS

**TWENTY YEARS INTO 'PLAN COLOMBIA,' IT'S CLEAR
THE EFFORT FIGHTING DRUG TRAFFICKING HAS DONE
NOTHING BUT HARM INNOCENT FARMERS.**

On April 28, 2011, Victor Burgos went out after lunch to pick the corns of pepper plants growing on his farm in Putumayo, Colombia, when a plane flew overhead and

dumped a fine spray of liquid all over his land. Within a year, he lost more than half of his food crops—primarily peppercorn, but also yucca, pineapple, plantain and more. His yearly income dropped nearly 80 percent, while the soil of his 250 acres overlooking dense tropical forests is now irrevocably polluted. His water sources are contaminated too.

The plane, he later found out, was flown by the counternarcotics division of the Colombian National Police, and the spray was an herbicide meant to eradicate illicit crops like the coca plants used to make cocaine and opium poppy; the fumigations were a part of the notorious—and notoriously ineffective—“Plan Colombia.”

Plan Colombia is a joint effort by the Colombian and U.S. governments, initiated in 1999 to end the armed conflict, ongoing since the 1960s, between left-wing guerrilla groups like the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia and governmental forces. The rebels got a lot of their funding from those illegal crops, and the government wanted to cut it off.

But for years, the plan has proved fruitless, according to the Washington Office on Latin America. Though 4.32 million acres have been sprayed since 1994 (when test fumigations began), the program has had very little success in stopping coca production. If anything, it backfired; the coca fields continued to flourish. In 1997, Colombia became the world’s primary cocaine producer and held that title for 16 years. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, from 2013 to 2014, the total cocaine production in Colombia rose 52 percent, from 290 to 442 metric tons.

Meanwhile, more and more evidence suggests the herbicide used, glyphosate, is toxic. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency **says** long-term exposure can cause respiratory problems, kidney damage and infertility; in March 2015, the World Health Organization’s International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) put out a report

suggesting that it causes cancer. Despite the **criticism** **the report garnered** from some (including many inside the agrochemical industry) for relying on relatively thin evidence, Colombia's Narcotics Council agreed to stop the fumigation plan. After nearly 20 years of international and local pressure, Colombia may finally stop spraying carcinogens on its own population in October. Until then, the poison rain continues to fall.

When Plan Colombia was first proposed, 90 percent of the cocaine consumed in the U.S. was from Colombia, and an initial \$1.3 billion “aid package” was heartily endorsed by both sides of the congressional aisle during the Clinton administration. For years afterward, Plan Colombia seemed immune to criticism by international human rights and environmental organizations; rejection by the European Union, which in 2001 voted against supporting the plan; and even condemnation by some members of the U.S. Congress. Despite the arguments and data showing that the aerial fumigation at the center of the anti-narcotic strategy was destroying legal crops and causing adverse health effects to innocent people, the program grew. President George W. Bush expanded the plan, and since then even more money flowed in; the total is now close to \$9 billion.

Much of that money has been spent spraying the land of innocent farmers. “There is absolutely zero percent coca here,” says Burgos, of his farm, “but you’ll still find 100 percent poison.” After his spraying incident, a major from the anti-narcotics base nearby told Burgos not to worry—the herbicide does no harm, he said, and laughed that soldiers at the base “bathe themselves with glyphosate.” Nevertheless, Burgos lodged a legal complaint, and a representative of the Secretary of Agriculture confirmed that his crops had been fumigated. But after five months of fighting for compensation, the departmental judicial authority told him “not to bother.”

“Here, you don't have the right to live,” says Burgos. “They fumigate you when [you are] in bed. The plane throws chemicals on you if you're outside with your family. They don't respect life and human rights.” Colombian locals are often displaced from their homes and communities by the violent regimes, left to fend for themselves, without any help from a state unable (or unwilling) to provide even a basic level of services. Burgos began life as a farmer in the central Colombian department Caldas and was forced to leave decades ago because of conflicts. He started over as a farmer near Puerto Guzmán, in Putumayo, in what has become Colombia's most fumigated area. When the government destroyed his livelihood, he was wrecked, he says, “physically, morally and psychologically.”



Manuel de Jesus Sanchez is pictured during an interview in Crucito, in Colombia's northwestern state of Cordoba. Sanchez says that four years ago he was working in his rice paddy when an airplane sprayed chemicals overhead. He has since been suffering skin problems and diminished eyesight. While aerial fumigation in Colombia has been a safer tactic for the military in their attempt to destroy coca fields, it's been a disaster for farmers. Credit: Fernando Vergara/AP

The initial thinking was that by flying through the air, military personnel would avoid the risks (land mines, insurgent troops) that come along with trying to destroy

coca fields on the ground. But while aerial fumigation might be safer for the military, it's been a disaster for farmers. Imprecise fumigations of the sort that befell Burgos are common. The people have been "sprayed like cockroaches" says Noel Amilcar Chapuez Guevara, governor of the council of Awa Tatchan, one of the many indigenous farming communities in Putumayo.

Often, wind would carry the pesticides to neighboring Ecuador, which eventually filed a lawsuit at the International Court of Justice in the Hague, arguing that the sprayings had caused serious damage to people, crops, animals and the environment. In 2013, the case was settled out of court for \$15 million. But Colombia's citizens and victims have never seen a single peso for the damage done by the fumigations.

The military might tell you that many of these farmers are, in fact, growing coca. But that doesn't necessarily mean they're making cocaine. Some of the indigenous groups in Colombia have a long cultural history with the coca leaf, which in its natural state is not a narcotic, and is used and consumed for religious, medicinal and nutritious reasons. It's not uncommon for subsistence farmers to have a few coca plants next to their food crops. But to those in charge of Plan Colombia, a coca plant is a coca plant, whether it's on a small patch of land cultivated for cultural purposes, or on a massive cocaine-producing plantation meant for shipment north.

Even when the military gets it right and targets criminal cocaine ventures, the effort is often wasted. Coca growers always find solutions to avoid the impact of a glyphosate dousing. Some growers will apply chemicals that neutralize the effect glyphosate would normally have on the plant. Some will wash the leaves after the sprayings. Others have even genetically constructed stronger, more resistant coca plants that stand up to the glyphosate.

Meanwhile, 20 years' worth of damage has been done to Colombian land and to the farming families that used to live

off it and are now struggling to survive. In areas of extensive fumigation, death of cattle and crops has created mass poverty (according to the country's National Administrative Department of Statistics, 44.7 percent of rural Colombia lives below the poverty line). And Daniel Mejia, an economist at the University of Los Andes in Bogotá, says that the consequences of glyphosate fumigations range from serious rashes and other dermatological problems to miscarriages, fetal deformities and long-lasting mental health disorders.

For the people of Putumayo, the government's announcement that it will end fumigations this fall was cold comfort, especially while there is no compensation coming their way. And airplanes are still dropping poison from the sky.



Christopher Capozziello/The New York Times/Redux

THE CHESHIRE MURDERS AND THE ILLUSION OF SAFETY

A HORRIFIC HOME INVASION IN SUBURBAN CONNECTICUT CALLS INTO QUESTION THE COMFORTS WE TAKE FOR GRANTED.

If hope is the thing with feathers, then dread is the thing with claws. A story like that of the Petit family sinks its talons into you and refuses to let go. “One of the worst crimes in Connecticut history,” as The New York Times called it, was notable neither for a sensational body count

nor for brainwashed perpetrators, à la the Manson “family.” Only three people died on the night of July 23, 2007, at 300 Sorghum Mill Drive in Cheshire, Connecticut. Car crashes routinely exact a greater toll. Gang violence on the South Side of Chicago might take five times that number on any summer weekend. But dread is unencumbered by statistics, just as it is immune to reason.

When photos of the victims appeared on television screens the night after the crime, many Americans saw slightly better versions of themselves. The Petits—an endocrinologist and his nurse wife—were well-off but not rich, good-looking but not striking. Jennifer Hawke-Petit, 48, was starting to show her age; Dr. William Petit Jr., 50, could lose some weight. Their house, two beige stories in the colonial style, was no gaudy McMansion of a Wall Street derivatives baron. Their daughters were next-doorish, their smiles for the camera always properly awkward, as befitting that more innocent era before duckface. Hayley, 17, was going to attend Dartmouth. Michaela, 11, liked Rachael Ray. If their lives could be so thoroughly rent apart, then so could yours. So could anyone’s.

The two men who intruded on the Petits’ blissfully average existence were Steven Hayes and Joshua Komisarjevsky. They too, in a sense, were average, at least as far as criminality was concerned. They weren’t people-hurters but, rather, stuff-takers. They dealt drugs and took drugs. They were, until that night, two down-and-out white guys in a state with some of the richest white people in the nation. They later said they thought the robbery at 300 Sorghum Mill Drive would be a simple transaction, conducted with minimal violence.

Arriving at the Petit house a little before 3 a.m., they went around back and found Dr. Petit asleep in the sunroom, where he had been reading reports for work. Komisarjevsky beat the doctor over the head with a baseball bat. The doctor awoke, horribly confused. The two men tied him up. Later,

they took Petit down to the basement, where they bound him to a pipe. Komisarjevsky propped him up on some pillows. He presumably did not want the doctor, who was bleeding, to be uncomfortable.

Upstairs, Michaela was in bed next to her mother, having fallen asleep while reading a Harry Potter novel. Hayley was snoozing in her own bed. All three women were bound, and pillowcases were put over their heads.

Hayes and Komisarjevsky spent the next several hours looking for valuables and cash, without finding much of anything. By morning, they were frustrated. Around 9 a.m., Hayes took Jennifer Hawke-Petit to a Bank of America branch, where she withdrew \$15,000. In the midst of doing so, she was able to alert a bank teller. The teller told a manager, who called the police.

That first call came at 9:21 a.m. “We have a lady who is in our bank right now who says that her husband and children are being held at their house,” the manager said, adding that the woman who withdrew the exorbitantly large sum appeared to be “petrified.”

Police did not intercept Hayes, who drove away from the bank with Hawke-Petit. Maybe if he were a little smarter, he would have left Hawke-Petit on some stretch of suburban road and fled, \$15,000 in his pocket. But instead of bolting, he dutifully returned to 300 Sorghum Mill Drive and discovered that while he had been at the bank, Komisarjevsky had performed oral sex on Michaela, an act he captured on his cellphone. **Hayes later testified that Komisarjevsky ordered him to “square things up” by raping Hawke-Petit**, which he did on the living room floor.

It remains unexplained why, as the police circled the house at 300 Sorghum Mill Drive, nobody even thought to knock on the door, ring the bell, just call the house phone. Something so simple could have saved three lives.

At 9:51 a.m., a bloodied Dr. Petit emerged from the basement. His feet still bound, he rolled across the lawn toward the house of a neighbor, who emerged in confusion, not recognizing the bloodied form before him. A police officer also approached.

“The girls are in the house!” Dr. Petit shouted.

The exact sequence of events is unclear, but it seems that, in quick succession, Dr. Petit escaped from the basement and Hayes strangled Hawke-Petit in response. Then the two men doused the house in gasoline, in hasty preparation for a gruesome final act they had not known they were about to stage. Both men later said the other lit the match.

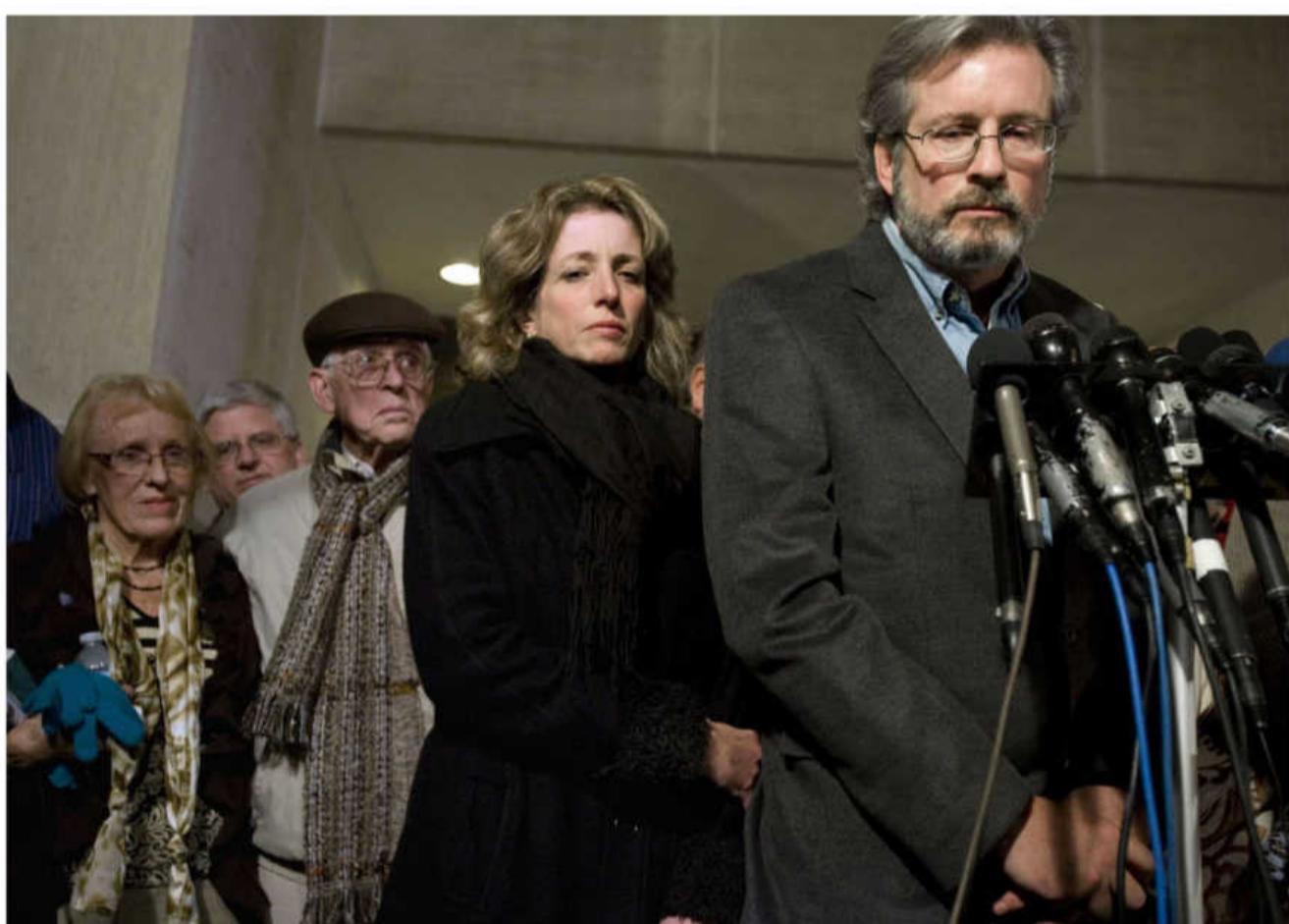
At 9:56 a.m., Hayes and Komisarjevsky burst out of 300 Sorghum Mill Drive. They tried to drive away in the Petits’ SUV but rammed a police vehicle and were quickly apprehended. The Petit house, meanwhile, burned as a summer rain fell on Cheshire. By the time firefighters made it inside, there was nobody left to save. Michaela had died of smoke inhalation in her bed while Hayley managed to free herself, only to succumb to fire and smoke at the top of the staircase.

In the eight years since the crime, the two killers and the night’s lone survivor have spoken haltingly and contradictorily to the press, so that some of the most fundamental questions about 7/23/07 remain unanswered. The most recent entry in this morbid oeuvre is [The Rising: Murder, Heartbreak, and the Power of Human Resilience in an American Town](#) by magazine writer and editor Ryan D’Agostino. The book is notable for its access to Dr. Petit, who has remarried and become a father again.

Komisarjevsky, who was 26 at the time of the murders, gave his version of events to true-crime writer Brian McDonald for his 2009 book [In the Middle of the Night: The Shocking True Story of a Family Killed in Cold Blood](#). McDonald allegedly paid Komisarjevsky \$300 for his story

and in the course of visiting and corresponding with him, appears to have been charmed by the killer. McDonald's affection for "Joshua" is almost as creepy as "Joshua" himself.

Two years ago came an HBO documentary, [The Cheshire Murders](#), which was the first time many outside Connecticut saw images of the crime: the charred remains of the Petit house, baby photos of the girls, jerky security camera footage of Hawke-Petit at the bank, looking like an average suburban mother, which is exactly what she had been until the previous night. "People in town refer to it as 'Cheshire's 9/11,'" a friend of the Petits says in the HBO documentary. "Life was one way, and then it's another."



Dr. William Petit, right, speaks to the media as his mother and father-in-law Marybelle Hawke, left, Richard Hawke, second from left, and sister Johanna Chapman listen, outside Superior Court in New Haven after a jury condemned Joshua Komisarjevsky to death for the murder of Petit's wife and daughters in New Haven, Conn., December 9, 2011. Petit is the sole survivor of the 2007 Cheshire, Conn., home invasion where his wife, Jennifer Hawke-Petit and their daughters, Hayley and Michaela, were murdered. Credit: Jessica Hill/AP

The pairing of Komisarjevsky and Hayes would have been comical, were it not so horrible. The duo were a malevolent Quixote and Panza, transplanted from dusty Spain to Connecticut, a state of silent factories, hedge fund mansions and strip malls, rivaled only by New Jersey in its juxtapositions between wealth and poverty.

Steven J. Hayes was a pudgy crack addict who could barely mastermind a ham sandwich. As a child, he was abused by a baby sitter, **which a forensic psychiatrist would later testify led him to develop a sneaker fetish.** His two brothers, both of whom appear in *The Cheshire Murders*, show an arresting absence of compassion for their sibling, their bloodlust at once deeply personal and utterly dispassionate.

“Fuck the trial,” says Matthew Hayes. “Flip the switch.”

“I hope it doesn’t even go that far,” says Brian Hayes. “I hope somebody puts a bullet in his head outside the courtroom.”

Hayes was an adolescent when he started drinking and smoking weed. He was first arrested at 16; by the time of the Cheshire murders, when he has 44, Hayes had been in jail or prison on 26 separate occasions, mostly for minor stuff that portended no murderous intent. This was a guy who prowled the parking lots of parks, looking for cars in which joggers or walkers had left purses or wallets. When he wasn’t stealing or doing time for stealing, he worked in restaurants.

Joshua Komisarjevsky is the more intriguing of the two, a kid with money and looks who never managed to trade on either. He was adopted at birth by a family that, on the paternal side, boasted both White Russians and New England blue-bloods. His adoptive grandfather was Theodore Komisarjevsky, one of the preeminent figures of belle époque Russian theater. After Theodore Komisarjevsky died, his widow, Ernestine Stodelle, a dancer, married John Chamberlain, a Yale man who wrote for *The New York*

Times. A good deal of Joshua Komisarjevsky's childhood was spent on Chamberlain's 65-acre Cheshire estate.

Komisarjevsky's adoptive father, Benedict, was an electrician, while his mother was a school librarian; both parents were devout Baptists who sometimes spoke in tongues. As a child, Komisarjevsky was diagnosed as having oppositional defiant disorder. He was abused by an adoptive brother and, later, abused an adoptive sister. His mother pulled him out of school and educated him at home and, for a time, at a Christian academy.

Whether out of boredom or psychic distress, Komisarjevsky started to come apart around the time he turned 14. **His mother later said he came under the influence of a “satanic cult,”** though it may have been only some local hooligans. Whatever the case, “he was breaking into an average of eight houses a week in Cheshire” by 1994, according to McDonald. “There was something sexual about the act of burglarizing houses for Joshua.” The following year came the death of his grandfather, Chamberlain, whom Komisarjevsky would call “one of the most pervasively inspiring role models of my life.” Shortly thereafter, Komisarjevsky was sent to a psychiatric hospital, after what appears to have been a suicide attempt.

But, as McDonald wrote, his parents were distrustful of psychiatric medicine: “For the Komisarjevskys, Jesus Christ was the answer to their son’s problems.” They sent him to a religious camp in Maine where he’d previously spent summers. He toured with a Christian music group, which proved a happy time, maybe the happiest time. Back in Connecticut, he joined the Army Reserves, less out of duty than as a way to escape jail (stolen sneakers, concealed knife). He wanted to become a sniper, but he left after basic training and drifted, once again, back to Connecticut. There, he dealt drugs and used drugs. “He was out of money,” McDonald wrote, “and had very few friends.”

In 2006, both men were at a halfway house in Hartford. The narrative of ablution and renewal must have been, to them, both familiar and preposterous, an official fairy tale meant to pacify castaways. In Connecticut, an ancient colony of Puritans, there were some who had clearly been blessed by that severe and silent God, graced by good things from birth. Others, though, languished in the shadows, mired in some cosmic disfavor they could not escape.

If there is a sacrosanct ritual in American civic life shared by all constituencies, ethnic and otherwise, then it is surely the visit to the supermarket: the selection of cereals, the palpation of produce, the bored gazes at celebrity tabloids and dieting magazines in the checkout line. It was outside just such a temple of culinary commerce, in the Stop & Shop parking lot, that Komisarjevsky noticed Hawke-Petit and Michaela, a budding gourmand who wanted to pick up some groceries for the pasta dinner she was going to make that night. He waited for them to emerge and followed them home.

Komisarjevsky later told detectives that he “started thinking it's a very nice house and very nice car and thought it would be nice to be there someday.” Note that his main desire, at least here, was to simply occupy the Petit household. It’s like he wanted to be adopted all over again.

That evening, Hayes and Komisarjevsky met up in the same Stop & Shop parking lot. They went for “a few beers” at Sports Rock USA in Bristol, according to McDonald’s book. They considered mugging people leaving bars or withdrawing money from ATMs, but these both seemed insufficient means of enrichment. So they drove to the very nice house Komisarjevsky had seen earlier that day. It was now nearly three hours past midnight. At 300 Sorghum Mill Drive, they went around the back, where Dr. Petit was sleeping in the sunroom.

“I hit him in the head with the baseball bat,” Komisarjevsky told the cops the following day, until a

bewildered and bellowing Dr. Petit “finally backed up into the corner of the couch and quieted down and was just staring at me with wide open eyes, just sheer confusion.” They tied him up and proceeded upstairs, where the Hawke-Petit and the girls were sleeping.

A few years ago, you could listen to [a confession like the one Komisarjevsky made](#) only if you wrote letters and made phone calls, pestering the cops and courts until they finally relented, though probably not without calling you a voyeuristic creep. Today, you can hear the roughly 90-minute audio recording of the confession on YouTube, the screen filled with a mug shot in which Komisarjevsky looks like a kid still too drunk to know where he has woken up. Whether you should listen to that confession is a complicated question. The recording proved so unnerving when played in court that the judge excused the jury for the day partway through. So caveat emptor.

It’s not that Komisarjevsky offers especially gruesome detail; nor does he have a psychopath’s equanimity, a chilly lack of affect. He sounds, instead, like a freshman in the principal’s office, aware that he has fucked up big time but still confident in his innate goodness and, maybe, his ability to get out of this very large pickle. He is definitely a killer, but he is just as definitely a child: “Obviously, I should have done better.”

After details of the Cheshire murders came to light, some wondered why Dr. Petit had not escaped sooner. Why had it taken him over six hours to free himself? Why had he run out of the house, not up the stairs to the second floor? In a culture where masculine superheroes routinely save the day, the notion of an incapacitated paterfamilias was an uncomfortable one. From prison, Komisarjevsky charged Petit with having been a “coward.”

In *The Rising*, D’Agostino argues against any such aspersion. He is not the first to speak on the record with Petit, who has been interviewed by Oprah Winfrey and

others. But in the book, he gives an apparently full detailing of that night. D'Agostino wrote that Petit, who was taking a blood thinner at the time, "had lost seven pints of blood [and] thought the two able-bodied men upstairs had a loaded gun." D'Agostino describes Petit as "almost lifeless" as paramedics rushed him to a hospital in Waterbury.

Somewhat improbably, *The Rising*, a book about a triple murder, ends on a happy note: Petit is once again a father and a husband, "trying to add bricks and mortar to his new life, a little more every day," in D'Agostino's words. Petit sought—and got—the death penalty for both men (although the state's highest court recently ruled against capital punishment, effectively relegating both men to life in prison). He also started a charitable foundation commemorating his wife and daughters, which he continues to run today.

The best true-crime books—*Fatal Vision*, *Helter Skelter*, *The Onion Field*—hit with a nihilistic thunderclap. Petit's survival tempers that blow, introducing the discordant element of hope. On television during the trials of Komisarjevsky and Hayes, Petit, with his graying mane and plangent voice, looked the part of a modern-day Lear: deposed, injured, furious at fate yet refusing to surrender his fundamental dignity.

Some in the state's Republican establishment wanted him to run for office, but Petit refused, citing a desire to spend time with his family. It was his second family. He knew it could be taken away, just like his first.



Mike Licht/NotionsCapital.com

DEAD PEOPLE SHOULD STOP TWEETING

**DEAD CELEBRITY TWITTER ACCOUNTS ARE A WASTE
OF TIME AND AN ABUSE OF TWITTER'S VERIFICATION
TOOL.**

The other day, I came across a quote by Albert Einstein.

Actually, it was a **tweet**. Actually, it was not something Einstein ever said. Einstein is dead. He died 51 years before Twitter's invention.

But you wouldn't know it from scrolling through the ghostly morass of Twitter.com. Ironically, the blue-

check-wielding Twitter account that displays Einstein's name and grizzled visage makes a point of **debunking** the **many quotes** misattributed to the late physicist. But it is guilty of its own form of misattribution: verified tweets bearing Einstein's name. There is no known record of the world's most influential theoretical physicist **employing the popular hashtag** #HumpDay. And when did Einstein ever utter anything **as corny as** the following tweet?

"
**#ThrowbackThursday to
#AlbertEinstein decked
out in some serious hat
swag. — pic.twitter.com/
EbDnXB546V — Albert Einstein
(@AlbertEinstein) June 25, 2015**

If we are going to talk **about Twitter's well-established identity problem**, then let's also talk about all of the dead celebrities hawking their wares in your feed. Giving a verified Twitter account to a long-dead celebrity is like writing a mediocre novel and then half-heartedly slapping "by Virginia Woolf" on the cover because Woolf's estate gave you permission. It's a waste of everyone's time and a pointless abuse of Twitter's verification tool. Let's ban the dead celebrities from Twitter.

I don't mean parody accounts. Those are fine. Some are clever. Most are not, but that's not the point—they're parodies. They indicate that fact clearly, per **company**

policy, or risk landing in Twitter jail. Sure, thousands of idiots still retweet and follow fake accounts like [@BillMurray](#) thinking they're legit, but any observant user can see it's not Murray. That's stated outright in the bio, and even if it weren't, the lack of a verification mark should be an obvious flag.

Verification, for the less obsessed, refers to the bright blue check mark you sometimes see attached to Twitter accounts. ([See it there?](#)) That verification badge is one of Twitter's simplest and most elegant features. It doesn't mean the user is necessarily famous or important or even has a lot of followers. While it does often signal a public figure, it simply means the user is who it's purported to be. In other words, the verified mark denotes that Twitter HQ has "verified" that the user is not an imposter—[@Cher](#) is really Cher (her tweets are [truly inimitable](#) anyway), [@POTUS](#) is really the president and so on.

"
**Vote for [@VisitGraceland](#) in the
@10Best Readers' Choice for
Best Musical Attraction. Thank
you very much! [http://t.co/
dWYo1N9X3h](http://t.co/dWYo1N9X3h)— Elvis Presley
(@ElvisPresley) May 27, 2015**

In the case of a politician or less Twitter-savvy celebrity, the verified account might be run by a social media manager or campaign staff, but the relevant idea

is that the figure in question approves the account and is not being misrepresented. The trouble with accounts like those of Albert Einstein, **Elvis Presley, Marilyn Monroe** or **Bob Marley**—let's call this "Ghost Twitter"—is that those celebrities can't possibly approve the accounts that are in their names. They're dead. And it's not in their will; they've been dead since long before Twitter's existence. Unless Twitter can demonstrate that Elvis is tweeting from heaven, the whole charade defeats the purpose of verification.

At best, a Ghost Twitter account is run by the late figure's estate and spits out harmlessly corny photos, quotes and **endless hashtags**. At worst, the account is outsourced to an outside digital content producer (the Einstein Twitter is run by "brand integration" manager **Corbis Entertainment**) and used to shill products tangentially related to the celebrity in question. Ghost Twitter is a place where Elvis Presley can **sell you an App**, John Lennon can **hawk a \$180 boxed set** and Humphrey Bogart might give you **Father's Day gift suggestions**. The tweets read like faceless ad copy, bearing little of the personality that helped make the celebrity famous in the first place.

"
**Don't miss our \$4.99 two-day
shipping special in the #JimiHendrix
online store <http://t.co/P16eRCkrYF>
#GiftCertificates also available too**
— Jimi Hendrix (@JimiHendrix)
December 19, 2014

Other popular members of Ghost Twitter, as mentioned in a 2012 Forbes.com round-up, include [Aaliyah](#) (who mostly just retweets fans), [George Harrison](#) (who likes to manually retweet Ringo—eerie!) and [2Pac](#). The rapper, to be fair, is listed as "2Pac.com," which is a nice way to separate the online entity from the deceased artist. Would these other accounts seem less ghastly if they affixed estate or .com to their display name? Probably. But they might draw fewer followers. George Harrison has around 200,000, while Bob Marley tops a million. Marley's likes to share revolutionary quotes and photos of the reggae star, while also [advertising](#) a coffee line that debuted 26 years after his death. There's already [occasional confusion](#) about whether Marley is alive, and these accounts are bound to baffle young fans who won't know otherwise.

When is it OK for a dead person to tweet? Roger Ebert's account makes for an interesting case study. The beloved film critic died in 2013, but since he was a prolific tweeter, he [gave his wife, Chaz Ebert, keys and instructions](#) for carrying on his online community after

his death. At present, there are companies and estate laws in several states designed to help people manage their digital afterlives; Facebook now lets users **designate a "legacy contact."** Seeing tweets from Roger Ebert in 2015 can be surreal, but they're managed by his widow and cognizant of the writer's wishes, as Chaz Ebert explained to a confused follower recently:

" @RStrickson @ChazEbert :
No worries, Roger gave me
strick orders not to cancel his
Twitter account.— Roger Ebert
(@ebertchicago) August 10, 2015

And in 2015, savvy users can take matters into their own still-living hands. Social media apps like TweetDeck let users schedule tweets years into the future. "When I'm on my deathbed, I'm gonna sit and schedule tweets for years to come, tweeting about what it's like after death," freelance writer Ash K. Casson **tweeted** on June 25. Joe Veix, a writer for Death and Taxes, went further, scheduling eerie messages to be sent out in the year 2086.

"!!
scheduled tweets from ~beyond
the grave~ pic.twitter.com/
LdhBIKsrlY— Joe Veix
(@joeveix) February 26, 2015

Veix scheduled the tweets using Hootsuite. His motives were surprisingly conceptual. "I was hoping that if I scheduled a tweet late enough, I could be responsible for the world's final tweet," he says. "Also, I was thinking about the fickle nature of the Web. That it'd be fun to mess with a different scale of time to point out this impermanence— scheduling a tweet using an app that will probably vaporize in a year, that's built for a service made by a company that will probably go out of business in five years, that utilizes an infrastructure that will probably collapse in [about] 30 years because of global warming (naïve, unscientific estimate), made for people who will (optimistically) all be dead in [about] 70 years."

Or maybe Twitter will survive. Maybe by 2086 we'll all be tweeting from the afterlife, using death-defying mobile apparatuses that we can't yet imagine. There will be specific social media guidelines that we'll receive in the Handbook for the Recently Deceased, like in *Beetlejuice*.

For now? Twitter is for the living.



Alexandra Leary

CHANGING THE CHANNEL: THE MAN WHO FIRST SWAM FROM ENGLAND TO FRANCE

**CAPTAIN WEBB CELEBRATES THE OLD-SCHOOL
BRAVERY OF THE FIRST MAN TO SWIM THE CHANNEL.**

The swimmer was tiring rapidly. "His circulation had begun to fail in his lower limbs, and he was obliged to have recourse to stimulants," wrote a reporter who had tagged along in a boat. In the end, no brandy or medicinal

potion was enough to avert what one newspaper later dubbed a "complete farce." J.B. Johnson had to abandon his 1873 attempt to swim across the English Channel. Though at 23 Johnson appeared to be in the ideal physical shape to complete the swim, his failure only confirmed what his contemporaries in Victorian England already believed: that the obstacles posed by the channel were too great to overcome. The water is notoriously cold even in midsummer, and a vexing mixture of currents and tides makes it impossible to swim the roughly 22 miles from England to France in a straight line.

However, Johnson's failure only made Matthew Webb's success two years later all the more miraculous. A new film by director Justin Hardy celebrates the forgotten hero who first conquered the channel with a dogged persistence that captured the attention of his fellow Victorians. Filmed as a conventional costume drama, Captain Webb gleefully stacks the odds against its Webb (Warren Brown). For one, few in Britain in the mid-1870s knew anything about swimming, let alone how to train someone to take on such a challenge. Worse still, Webb's coach, the excitable Professor Beckwith (Steve Oram), admits that he does not know how to swim. In one effort to teach his pupil better technique, the intrepid instructor catches a frog and tells Webb to emulate the slippery creature's movements: "Be a frog! Forget the arms, a frog does not have arms," he shouts. It's not surprising when Webb's first attempt to cross the channel fails.

Abandoned by his family and financiers, Webb takes Beckwith's daughter as a consolation prize. Quite the English rose, Agnes (played by Georgia Maguire) is a champion swimmer. More than just Webb's love interest, she's his only remaining supporter—even going so far as to offer her body to Webb's American rival, Paul Boyton (Terry Mynott), if he'll stop sabotaging the captain's next attempt. Fortunately, Boyton declines. A brilliant showman, Boyton has the tempered vitriol, posturing and noisy

brinkmanship that make for the perfect antagonist to Webb's shy determination.

Paul Boyton swam the channel first. However, he used a buoyant suit designed by the inventor Clark S. Merriman, which allowed him to half-drift, half-propel himself forward with a wooden oar.

As the captain embarks on his final—and eventually successful—attempt, the director intercuts the swimming with a scene in which Webb tries and fails to rescue a fellow seaman. Though that scene is based on historical fact, it fails to explain the captain's hazardous obsession with swimming the channel. As the exhausted swimmer is besieged by jellyfish, his skin peeling off, it seems like his rationale may have been less a redemption story and more a result of Webb's Victorian sensibilities.

Webb is often perceived as the "inventor" of extreme sports, for the ways in which he pushed the physical and technological limits of his time. But today's base-jumpers and wingsuit-wearers seem to pursue their dangers for largely narcissistic reasons, looking to compensate for the life-or-death risks that have all but vanished from modern life. The less we're in danger of getting killed in our day-to-day, the more some of us crave experiences that hint at our mortality. Instead, Webb belonged to a Victorian cult of "manliness," where valor was the ultimate goal, not excitement for its own sake. He saw himself as a loyal servant to his country, and he considered chivalry and persistence as important as success.

01

TEARS FOR CHANGE

Haitians cry and rub their eyes in reaction to teargas fired by police during a clash with demonstrators in Port-au-Prince, December 13, 2014. Protesters marched through the streets accusing the government of corruption, demanding the resignations of President Michel Martelly and Prime Minister Laurent Lamothe to make way for new elections. Under mounting pressure at home and abroad, Lamothe resigned the following day.



Hector Retamal/AFP/Getty

02

TRASHING THE OPPOSITION

Beirut—Garbage piles up along a street on August 26, days after violent clashes between police and anti-government protesters left dozens wounded. In July, political gridlock led to the closure of a landfill and suspension of trash collection. After the powerful Shiite party Hezbollah and its Christian allies walked out of an emergency cabinet meeting, protesters took to the streets in what has become a rallying cry for countrymen upset with the government's failure to address basic infrastructure and services issues, as well as what many view as a rigged system that favors those connected to those in power.



Mohamed Azakir/Reuters

03

CRAWL SPACE

Röszke, Hungary—Syrian migrants cross the Hungarian border from Serbia, August 27. So far this year, police say more than 140,000 migrants have been intercepted entering Hungary, mostly from neighboring Serbia. Many of those who first landed in Greece have given up on the economically challenged nation and are moving toward northern Europe in hopes of claiming asylum in Austria or Germany.



Bernadett Szabo/Reuters

04

POLL VAULT

Mobile, Alabama—Republican presidential front-runner Donald Trump takes the stage at Ladd-Peebles Stadium on August 21. The billionaire real estate developer continues to surge in the polls, thanks in part to his populist rhetoric. In recent weeks, he has talked about raising taxes on hedge fund managers and imposing tariffs on American companies that outsource labor or move their global headquarters outside the U.S.



Mark Wallheiser/Getty

Newsweek